THIS BIOGRAPHY

OF

GEORGE BANCROFT

BY

RUSSEL B. NYE

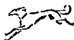
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George Bancroft



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BRAHMIN REBEL



By RUSSEL B. NYE

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Preface

George Bancroft was a product of that age called happily by Van Wyck Brooks "the flowering of New England," and he lived through its Indian summer as well. Since 1920 there has been a revaluation of the nineteenth century New England mind, with a correspondingly increased respect for the men who assisted in its great awakening While the leading figures of that period have been left for the most part secure in the positions of eminence awarded them by our grandparents, others have been found to be, if not as great as Emerson and his fellows, at least as interesting and provocative personalities. The half-remembered names of William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker, Jones Very, Edward Everett, Bronson Alcott, William Hickling Prescott, George Ripley, and others have taken a place in the galaxy that once glittered in Boston, Concord, and Cambridge. We have realized that the lesser luminaries of the past often throw into relief the times in which they lived with a clarity and profusion of detail not always found pertaining to the great ones, the lower intensity of their light proving to be of greater advantage in illuminating their backgrounds. Emerson, like Shakespeare and Goethe, is timeless He can be read without reference to the age in which he wrote and thought, but no one can follow George Bancroft through his ninety-one years — more than half the span of the nation's independent existence — without living with him through the turbulence of the nineteenth century

Bancroft was best known as a historian, and, as he wished, is remembered as one But he was much more than a writer of history He was a maker of it as well. To another and later generation his political life, his diplomatic career, and his influence as an intellectual force in American thought appear in retrospect nearly as important as the volumes upon which his reputation rested. He was

quite representative of his times — more so perhaps than its greatest thinker, Emerson, its greatest rebel, Thoreau, and its greatest artist, Hawthorne — for he succeeded in combining the active and the contemplative life to a degree rarely equalled by others of his day. As a historian, his significance lies not so much in the fact that he was the first renowned historian of America, but in the manner in which he wrote and interpreted that history, in the temper of the optimistic, idealistic golden day. He was the man, perhaps, who caught the spirit of his age best.

I have thought it proper to allow Bancroft, as much as possible, to tell his own story, supplemented by the accounts and impressions of his acquaintances Footnotes and other scholarly apparatus have been largely dispensed with, not only because their use would simply lead to repetitious citations of letters and dates, but because it would add little of actual importance. The bibliographies are intended to remedy the omission from the text of detailed information concerning sources and references

I am indebted to the New York Public Library, the Massachusetts Historical Society of Boston, and the American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Massachusetts, for permission to examine their collections of Bancroft material, and to the Michigan State College Library and the Michigan State Library for their courteous assistance. I wish also to express my thanks to William C. Hummel, Ben Euwema, and Claude M. Newlin, who read part or all of the manuscript, for their criticisms, and to Harry Hayden Clark, under whose supervision this study was originally begun.

RUSSEL B. NYE

East Lansing, Michigan
February 4, 1943

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George Bancroft

CHAPTER ONE

The Massachusetts Background
1800–1818

George Bancroft was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, on October 3, 1800, at the opening of a new century, a year after Washington's death had marked the passing of the old. Already the land was stirring, and the nation was on the eve of momentous change The shadow of the democrat Thomas Jefferson, soon to be elected President, lay across the states, and the great dormant mass of farmers, artisans, mechanics, and tradesmen who formed the body of his political party began to move toward the unfinished muddy capital of Washington The long lines of pioneers moved steadily across the mountains to the West; those who paid attention to such things noticed that since 1775 the population of the country had nearly doubled They noted that the logtowns of the frontier — Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, and the others with the unfamiliar names — were no longer merely wilderness outposts but growing villages and cities. The hopeful, optimistic nineteenth century was opening, a new page was turning.

Massachusetts, entrenched in its ancestral Federalism, lived on imperturbably in the eighteenth century. John Adams, a solidly conservative native son, still sat firmly in the presidential chair. Sam Adams, the Boston firebrand of Revolutionary days, had long since turned hard-shelled reactionary Boston, though not yet the intellectual hub of the universe, was nevertheless the focus of the nation's seaborne commerce. The paramount concern of Massachusetts was no longer theology, as it had been for a century and a half, but business; the greatgrandsons of the Puritans were perhaps less interested in the path of salvation than they were in the route to the Pacific Northwest and China. Though the last of the mighty Mathers had been dead but a few years, the bonds of their

Calvinism were slackening, their stern, resolute Puritanism dissolving into a more bland and worldly disposition, and not far from the Mathers' own Second Church one might find Unitarians, Baptists, New Lights, and others worshipping in undisturbed tranquillity. The clergy had largely relaxed its hold over the daily life of New England, but in partnership with the conservative wealthy families still retained indirect control of all political and intellectual life, making it difficult for any man, no matter how brilliant, to secure a prominent place in public life if he were marked by political or religious heterodoxy.

The somnolence into which the old Commonwealth had fallen was equally evident in its mental life The intellectual energy of the Puritans, the heritage which had produced the Mathers, Winthrop, Cotton, Edwards, and many more, had largely burned itself out, there were no novelists, poets, or scholars in the old sense, but a geographer like Jedidiah Morse, an untutored mathematical genius like Nathaniel Bowditch, or a minor historian like Jeremy Belknap Ralph Waldo Emerson, speaking with understandable overstatement of the sterility of his native state some years later, said that "from 1790 to 1820 there was not a book, a speech, or a conversation, or a thought" in Massachusetts. But if Massachusetts slept, barren of great minds, it did not matter, for the customshouses and the banks were full, the swift ships roamed the seas over the globe, the clergymen had full and devoted congregations, the Federalists ran the state efficiently and safely, and no one thought too much or too deeply. All was right with Massachusetts

There was little about the first five generations of the Bancroft family to imply that it would overturn any of New England's applecarts. The first Bancroft, John, came to America from Norfolk with his wife and two small sons, John and Thomas, to take a farm near Lynn in 1632, and although he was the subject of one of Cotton Mather's tales of miraculous recovery from smallpox, he died soon after. Thomas, about ten years old at the time of his father's arrival in Massachusetts, farmed near Dedham until 1653, when he moved [illegible]

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junior, born about 1649, carried on the tradition — deacon, selectman, soldier in King Philip's War, the father of nine — and his son Samuel, born in 1693 in his father's new house in the west parish

of Reading, was like his father a soldier in the Indian Wars, selectman, deacon, and deputy to the Massachusetts General Court. Neither did Samuel junior, born in 1715, deviate from the pattern of his ancestors. He served as selectman, justice of the peace, deputy to General Court, and, as a deacon of the church, he gained dubious distinction as a member of the ecclesiastical council which in 1759 dismissed Jonathan Edwards, stained with evangelic mysticism, from his Northampton pulpit. For five generations the Bancrofts combined civic duties, rock-ribbed Calvinism, and farming in equal proportions until in Aaron, born the son of Deacon Samuel of Reading in November, 1755, the tenth of eleven children, the strain suddenly ran out.

Young Aaron Bancroft found neither his father's vocation nor his creed to his liking, and even as a boy was looked upon as the family rebel. For one thing, he wanted an education, and whenever he could spare the time from the heavy farm work on his father's land he studied. Common school kept but four months of the year, leaving him to augment his scanty schooling by whatever means he could discover. Once he followed a migrant teacher through two counties to learn the fundamentals of writing and arithmetic. His Latin and Greek he obtained through the generosity of a young minister nearby, who unfortunately for the cause of letters fell in love and lost all interest in the classics, leaving his pupil stranded in the middle of Caesar. His father's church held little that appealed to him. His mind revolted against Willard's *Body of Divinity*, the customary required reading of Calvinist boys, and the Catechism he could never understand or respect. Samuel Bancroft's household was an orthodox and pious one, and on Sat-

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to the popular creed," he wrote in the memoranda of his old age, "yet I [illegible]
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Despite his personal aversion to his father's faith he seems from the first to have been drawn toward the church. The first of his line to abandon the family vocation of farming, he entered Harvard in 1774, with the Revolution in the offing, intending to become a

minister and studying through the interruptions and turbulence of the war years to graduate with honors in 1778. Politics and war, not science, theology, and literature, occupied the minds of the Cambridge faculty, and the government of the college was slack during the war. The young divinity student never believed that he gained from Harvard all that he wished. "The minds of the Professors and Tutors were too much engrossed with the important affairs of the nation," he wrote, "to give close and continued attention to their pupils. The foundation of my education was thus very imperfect." The atmosphere of free discussion, however unsatisfactory his schooling at Cambridge may have been, appealed to him. For the first time he was able to express and discuss with others his questions and his doubts concerning the orthodox creed, but the proximity of hostilities and the constant threat of a British occupation of Massachusetts interfered with studies and broke the serenity of college life too often for satisfactory study. The story persisted that he was one of a group of young men who shouldered muskets and marched from Harvard toward Lexington to fight the British, but when his college years were over, at least, he found nothing in the war to keep him from entrance into his chosen profession. For a year after his graduation he remained in Cambridge, teaching school, preaching an occasional sermon in a nearby church, and studying theology while his own beliefs broadened and matured. Working one's way into the Massachusetts church organization was, in the 1780's, a long procedure, and in 1780 the young man was glad to accept a Congregational mission to Nova Scotia for three years, where he preached at Yarmouth, Annapolis, and Horton before being called back. In 1783 the Reverend Mr. McCarty of the Old South Church in Worcester was too ill to continue his preaching, and Aaron Bancroft was his substitute.

Worcester, when it took Aaron Bancroft, received more than it bargained for. The three years in Nova Scotia had been spent among free-thinking and realistic farmers and fishermen, and in critical study of the Congregational creed When the young minister returned he was frankly unorthodox, in open revolt against the beliefs of his own church and of his parishioners The faculty of the reason, he told his congregation in one of his first sermons, and not necessarily the Bible, was the primary and universal revelation of God to men of all nations and ages. He was sure of the necessary harmony between reason and true religion, and equally

sure that whatever seemed to him plainly in contradiction to the reason ought to be rejected — something that amounted very nearly to heresy. The majority of his congregation were shocked at his views and his sermons, and accordingly when McCarty died in 1784 they declined to follow the custom of bestowing the succession upon his substitute. There were a few, however, who liked the forthright young preacher, and after a few months of bickering, sixty-seven of them (a few Unitarians, some Socinians, some Arminians, and even a deist and New Light or two) seceded from the church body to found the Second Congregational Society of Worcester, with the heretical Bancroft installed as their pastor.

The Second Church had no theological articles of belief, no confession of faith, few rules of worship, and a simple statement of creed written out by its minister:

"We do hereby profess our firm belief of the Holy Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testaments. And taking them as our sole and sufficient rule of faith and practice, we do covenant to and with each other, that we will walk together as a Christian society, in the faith and order of the Gospel. And we do hereby engage, as far as in our power, for all under our care, that we will live as true disciples of Jesus Christ, in all good carriage and behavior, both towards God and towards man . . " Only two congregations in the county dared send representatives to the opening of the new church, for the simplicity and liberalism evinced by Bancroft's covenant of faith was accounted dangerous. It was thought that any church, founded upon such illusory and misconceived principles, had not long to live Yet Aaron Bancroft remained minister of the Second Church for an even fifty years

If Aaron Bancroft ever did fight the redcoats at Lexington, he needed all the courage the incident proves he possessed to keep his church in existence, for to rebel against the established churches of Massachusetts was no light and casual undertaking. He did not realize it, but similar differences of opinion between young liberals and old conservatives were happening all over New England. There was a slow-burning revolt against orthodoxy under way in the organization of the Congregational Church — Mayhew, Chauncy, and others had kindled the spark not long before — and Aaron Bancroft and his Second Church were simply part of a movement that was to emerge triumphant thirty years later under the guidance of William Ellery Channing. In 1784, however, the way he

chose was hard. It was customary for ministers to exchange pulpits frequently, thereby gaining experience and acquaintance as well as relief from the responsibility of writing fresh sermons each Sabbath, but no invitations came to Bancroft. For seven years he talked to no other congregation than his own. He was talked against, preached against, and shunned by the pastors of his own church. His salary was miserably low, and he scratched out a bare subsistence wage by tutoring the children of his few friends and parishioners in Latin and Greek. Immediately after his church was established he found it threatened with extinction by Massachusetts law, which held that the financial support of a church was a duty of the town and that the town as a political body played a controlling part in church affairs. Bancroft's parishioners, therefore, must pay taxes to support Old South, since it was the official town church of Worcester, though few of them could afford to support two churches at once. They did, however, for three years, until Bancroft forced the politicians in 1787 to change the law. His was the first church in Massachusetts to stand upon the principle upon which all United States churches now exist, that the support of a church is a religious duty of the people and not a political duty of the state.

When Aaron Bancroft came to Worcester in 1783 he met in his congregation a handsome, strong-featured girl of eighteen named Lucretia Chandler. There was good New England blood in her family — the Churches of Rhode Island, the Chandlers of the Massachusetts bench and pulpit, the Gardiners of Connecticut who once held an entire island in entail — but the family, once wealthy and socially prominent, had been reduced to straits by the revolution. Unfortunately for the family fortune Lucretia's father, Judge John Chandler, and her half-brother Clark were Tory sympathizers. Clark Chandler was town clerk of Worcester, and his finger-marks may still be seen on a page of the town records where, under compulsion, he erased thus certain entries obnoxious to the patriots of 1775. Judge Chandler, better known locally as "Tory John," had been driven from Worcester with his son to Halifax and later to London, where he was living still, vainly trying to obtain reimbursement from the Crown for the seizure of his home and possessions. He actually had been rich, for his estate was valued [illegible] fifty thousand pounds sterling, but noth-

ing to something less than twenty thousand pounds, that he earned the name in London of "the honest refugee." Lucretia, a girl of twelve and the oldest daughter, helped keep the family together after her father's precipitate flight until a few years later the death of her mother, grieving over the drowning of her two eldest sons and the loss of her home and husband, shifted full responsibility to her fifteen-year-old shoulders. She had had little opportunity for education, and her girlhood had been neither pleasant nor easy, yet, as she said later, "I possessed a cheerful disposition — and my mother would sometimes tell me in a plaiful manner, I should never have more at heart than I should throw off at my heels — I was always ready for any amusement. . . ."

After three years of companionship Aaron Bancroft and Lucretia Chandler were married in 1786, much to the disappointment of her younger brothers, who thought that she could have done much better. There was some reason for their objection to the match, for Aaron's future was distinctly uncertain. His salary was something less than one hundred pounds yearly, his congregation was neither large nor affluent, his privately supported church had no official standing or certain income, and his chances for advancement in the tightly-knit clerical profession were doubtful as long as his notorious unorthodoxy was evident. Lucretia Chandler did not mind, for as she wrote her daughter a half century later, "I had been tried in so many ways. I found there was no certainty in riches, trouble would come and it might be softened by the quiet life I might leed with a clergeman " She never quite recovered from the fact that he had chosen her from the others, and after forty-two years of married life she still expressed wonder to her children that " . . . your father could ever have thought of a young girl like me for his wife — one who was almost a child of nature, unfortunate in being bred without the least culture of mind "

Her husband never had any reason to regret his choice, for the cheerful strength and even temperament of his wife were of great value to him in the next few years as he struggled to make a place for himself in the church and to support a household. The old Chandler house at Maine and Mechanics streets provided them a home. Aaron kept up his tutoring, but the beginning years were hard as the children began to come, eight in the first seventeen years, thirteen in all His wife studied Count Rumford's cookbook, made inexpensive soups and puddings, and stretched the meager

salary to its limit Even though her husband turned back one-third of his small earnings to help build a church, she made no protest. There were meals consisting only of "rye bread tosted, and the fragments of coffee boyled and putt on milk," but everyone thrived. In a few years they took a small farm on the outskirts of the town, improving the quality of their fare from their own land, and little by little things became better. The new church was finished in 1792, so that the congregation no longer had to meet in the courthouse. Aaron slowly gained a foothold in the church organization, exchanging pulpits now and then, attending conferences, writing excellent sermons, and by the sheer power of his mind commanding respect for himself and his ideas from the town and his brother clergymen. By 1800 he was able to afford a better home on Salisbury street, where he lived for the rest of his years. His salary was raised to $500 in 1797, to $700 by 1806, by 1810 to $800 yearly, and his church prospered, though it was many years before Worcester accepted its presence as permanent or desirable. Ten years after the trouble had quieted down a visitor asked a parishioner of Old South, "How does it happen that you, who profess to be in possession of the true faith, are so frequently in contention, while the Second Society, whom you denominate heretics, live in peace and harmony?" "The members of the Second Society," he was told, "don't have enough religion to quarrel about it."

In 1807 Bancroft published his *Life of Washington,* a solid and painstaking piece of work, far surpassing that of Parson Weems in scholarship and execution, a book written directly and gracefully "for the unlettered portion of the community," as its preface avowed, and one which gained favorable attention throughout the state. Furthermore, the path became easier as time went on, for a wave of religious liberalism swept over New England in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Harvard put a Unitarian, Henry Ware, into its Divinity School in 1805. By 1815 more than a few New England churches had gone over to Unitarianism, and when William Ellery Channing finished his speech at the ordination of Jared Sparks in 1819 at Baltimore, the Unitarians were the masters of Massachusetts theology. Since the body of principles on which his Second Society was founded, long before Channing's time, had in it the heart of Unitarianism — its freedom from articles of faith, its reliance on the individual reason and judgment in matters spiritual, its denial of dogmatism, its New Testament principles —

the change was an easy one for Aaron Bancroft to make. From the beginning he was a factor in the movement away from Calvinism; the American Unitarian Association, which he helped to found in 1825, recognized his contributions to the cause of religious liberalism by making him its honorary president at the age of seventy. In the early stages of the movement he soon came to be regarded as a pioneer in and a herald of the liberal faith, a man whose words counted, and one to whom younger men came for guidance and inspiration. Harvard, where his friend Kirkland was president, awarded him an honorary D.D. in 1810, and his series of sermons preached in 1822, *Sermons Preached on the Doctrines of the Gospel and on Those Constituent Principles of the Church which Christian Professors have made the Subject of Controversy*, were for many years the standard statement of the liberal position, evoking from no less an authority than John Adams the comment that they were "a chain of diamonds set in links of gold." The Boston group, after twenty years, accepted him as a capable historian and biographer and a competent clergyman — a sure sign of success. He became president of the powerful Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Piety, and Charity, a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a vice-president of the American Antiquarian Society, a member of the governing board of Leicester Academy, a contributing member (with the intellectuals William Emerson, Dr. Gardiner of Trinity Church, William Tudor, Kirkland of Harvard, Daniel Webster, Joseph Story, and Alexander Everett) of the Anthology Society of Boston, publishers of *The Monthly Anthology*, one of the first of the distinguished New England magazines.

After such turbulent beginnings the minister's career settled down into a quiet pattern of study and the care of his church He was finally relieved of his full pastoral duties in 1827, when his failing health led his congregation to appoint Alonzo Hill as his assistant, and in 1836 he retired from active service on the fiftieth anniversary of his installation as pastor of the Second Church "I have outlived my generation," he told his parishioners in his farewell sermon, "and in the midst of society must be considered a solitary man," and in effect he spoke the truth He was too old to fight the new battles of theology and the old ones had all been won Things were happening in New England that he could not understand, although they were the natural results of forces which he

himself had helped to set in motion, things such as the resignation from his pulpit in 1832 of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the brilliant but erratic son of his friend William. The Unitarian church was too binding and narrow, and a man must investigate for himself, thought Emerson, and there were many young men, like him touched with a new manner of thinking called "transcendentalist," who agreed with him. The old man, remembering his own youth as a fighter for religious freedom, could not help admiring the spirit of Emerson's thinking, but he could not sympathize with the results, which seemed to him to point the way toward simple anarchy. He would have liked to point out gently to the youthful radicals the error of their ways, but that would have to be left to others. Consoling himself with the thought that the excitement would pass as quickly as it came and that the truth would ultimately prevail, he lived on quietly in Worcester, corresponding with his wide circle of friends, taking a daily walk to the post-office, and reading in his book-lined study. In April, 1839, his wife died after fifty-three years of the quiet life she "might leed with a clergeman," and Aaron, returning from her funeral, never left his house again. In August he died, and the first of the Bancroft rebels was buried in his grave.

George Bancroft was the fourth son and eighth child of Aaron and Lucretia Bancroft. Of their thirteen children, six survived the parents — three girls, Eliza, Lucretia, and Mary, Henry, an East India captain and one of McDonough's commanders at the Battle of Lake Champlain, who died at thirty; John, the second son, who was lost at sea. The family in which the boy was reared was a close-knit group, held together by something more than ties of blood. From Lucretia the children learned patience, fortitude, and optimism; she was always remarkable, her son remembered, for her "playful cheerfulness" The personality of Aaron, however, left a deep and lasting impress upon that of his son. Gentle and kindly, Aaron prayed daily for a "teachable temper," and none of his children could ever remember his voice raised in anger, although he referred sadly now and then to his "irascible boyhood" and the effort that had been required to establish control over his temper. In his house the religion his children learned was not the stern and fearsome thing that had driven him from his father's faith. Freedom of inquiry, complete liberty of investigation, the integrity of one's own mind — these were the principles by which his religion lived. His sons and daughters read widely, after the fashion of

ministers' children of the day, in the contemporary polemics attendant on the clash between Unitarianism and Orthodoxy, and although Aaron knew where he stood, he carefully avoided giving any bias to his children's minds before they could judge for themselves. One child, hearing much discussion of the doctrine of future punishment, inquired his views, but instead of answering directly he outlined the three most prominent theories and refused to comment further. His daughter Eliza, in the midst of the hottest arguments between liberals and conservatives, read Channing's letters to Worcester and asked her father's opinion of Channing's logic. "Have you read Dr. Worcester's letters?" he asked Receiving a negative reply, he dismissed her with "What, are you a daughter of mine, and do you read only one side of a question?" "I cannot recall a single instance," his son said, "in which he attempted to mould or sway my opinions on religious dogma or politics."

In such an atmosphere, in a home with an almost fanatic regard for the individual judgment, George Bancroft was reared. The home was of course one of learning too, for Aaron, remembering his own attempts to learn in moments stolen from farmwork, made sure that his children found an education less difficult to obtain. In his library for his children to read was all the stored-up knowledge of his own time and of centuries past, Locke and his fellow philosophers, Samuel Clarke, Bishop Butler and Bishop Law, Tillotson and Price, the Puritan fathers and the new liberals, dozens of histories of the old world and the new, the Latin and Greek classics in faded bindings *The Christian Observer*, a periodical of Low Church origin filled with excellent literary reviews and articles, was always ready at hand. Even if learning had not been a tradition in Massachusetts it would have been hard for the Bancroft children to escape a consciousness of it, for Aaron's house was always filled with the excitement of ideas. The distinctive traits of George Bancroft's mature personality may be traced to the influence of his home and parents as they were in the decade from 1800 to 1810. The boy's independence of mind, his respect for learning, meticulous scholarship, simplicity of manner, friendly tolerance of the ideas of others, and cheerful fortitude in the face of adversity, were simply reflections of similar qualities found in Aaron and Lucretia Bancroft and the life they lived

There were other things that pressed themselves into the wax of a boy's mind. Not far away were Lexington and Concord and

Boston Common. Plenty of living men had looked at King George's soldiers through rifle sights, and above the mantel in many homes hung a musket last fired at Breed's Hill or Saratoga. In Worcester any boy might see the inn where Washington, in a plain brown suit and riding a bay horse, stopped for breakfast in 1789 while the Worcester Light Artillery fired salutes outside. George could hear from his own father innumerable stories of the War and the Confederation, and see for himself the pleasant green country lanes where redcoat and militia clashed. To the boys of New England born before 1820 the War for Independence and the men and principles for which it was fought were very close, knit into their mind's fabric in a way not known to later generations. The phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" had a contemporary ring in the years of Bancroft's boyhood, and the air of Massachusetts still quivered with the sound of shots fired at Lexington and Concord Bridge Such things made a difference. For two hundred years Massachusetts had produced men who looked kings and prelates straight in the face, who bent the knee only to God, and who considered themselves, honestly and without arrogance, the equals of any other men on the face of the earth, in the statehouse, on the battlefield, or in the church.

The blend of farm and church which was typical of New England life in the early nineteenth century wrought its effects on George Bancroft's personality. The boy Longfellow sat on the ocean wharves watching the waves ride in from Spain and listening to the bearded sailors spin tales of Greenland and China, but to a Worcester farm boy the world was of no such vastness. Everything was small and close. The prim town of Worcester was over the next hill, but Boston and the sea were forty miles away, a fabulous distance. Instead of ships and the sea to capture his imagination Bancroft as a boy had the ciderpress near the creek, the white locust

river beyond were there for adventure, as the apple orchards and peach trees were there for juvenile pillage. The Worcester countryside was interesting and beautiful. The Nipnapp River (later named the Little Blackstone) and the ponds — Quinsigamond to the east near Nelson's school, North Pond, Bladder, Halfmoon,

Round, Flint, and others — were useful for swimming, rafting, and fishing, while the old hills, called Tatasset by the Indians and now renamed Winter Hill, Mount Ararat, Millstone, Sagatabscot, Packachoag, and Wigwam, were filled with unexplored thickets and pirate hideouts

There was, of course, plenty of hard work at home. The Bancroft farm, like so many others, took all the labor a large family could provide to keep it clear of the stones that appeared from nowhere each spring, and it was difficult to coax good crops from the thin, worked-over soil. Except for frequent trips to nearby Worcester and less frequent ones to larger and more distant settlements, young George Bancroft grew up in a world circumscribed by farm and church and his father's library, where books took him not to Boston and the sea and the marketplace but, instead, back through the stream of history to the tortured old theological quarrels of the Puritan colonies, the glitter of the early English kings, and the majestic pomp of Greece and Rome. He never lost the stamp of the world of books, nor the localistic point of view of the farm boy, the subconscious love of the library or the wonder at the sight of faraway places and people. Berlin was as fresh and new to him at sixty-seven as it was at seventeen, and the Rhine Valley always reminded him of New England

George Bancroft's boyhood seems to have been normal in every respect He was a "wild boy," he told a friend later in life, but the wildness is attested to only by reports of his insistence on sailing a raft in the river against parental orders and by the theft of a few apples. The Bancroft farm was a mile and a half from Worcester and two miles from Nelson's school, the only halfway decent one, at the extreme opposite end of the village From the age of eight to the age of eleven he walked four miles a day for mediocre instruction, although he learned far more at home by reading in his father's library or by listening to the conversation of his father's guests as they talked in the evenings. At six the boy was so far advanced in his reading that his father once called him from the corner where he had been listening quietly to settle a question in Roman history over which he and Theophilus Parsons, Chief Justice of Massachusetts, were disputing. Nelson the schoolmaster offered nothing of the classics, but the son of Aaron Bancroft could hardly neglect the great body of Greek and Roman thought. Some

instruction from his father, who had tutored many children, and help from one of Aaron's friends took him through Caesar before he was ten.

It was clear to the family by this time that the boy had possibilities that ought to be developed. Already he had expressed a desire to follow his father into the ministry, and since George had passed far beyond what the local schools could offer, Aaron decided to send his son to Phillips Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire, a school which aimed, in its founder's words, at "promoting Piety and Virtue, for the education of youth in the English, Latin, and Greek languages, in Writing, Arithmetic, Music, and the Art of Speaking, Practical Geometry, Logic, and Geography, and such other of the Liberal Arts, Sciences, and Languages as opportunity may hereinafter permit." Founded by John Phillips in 1781, four years after his nephew founded Phillips-Andover in Massachusetts, Exeter's somewhat more liberal atmosphere inclined its products toward Harvard, while Andover's orthodoxy pointed toward conservative Yale. This fact, added to Exeter's democratic tinge — John Phillips had said, "It shall ever be equally open to youth of requisite qualifications from every quarter" — influenced Aaron Bancroft's choice as he searched for a place to send his brilliant, clerically-minded son of eleven

In 1811 George Bancroft left home for Exeter to spend two years in preparation for college. The modest tuition fee of three dollars a term, and the cost of board and room at a private home, since no such thing as a dormitory existed, proved a heavy drain on the Bancroft finances, already strained by numerous children to feed and an aged grandmother to support, but Aaron squeezed the money from somewhere, calling on his prosperous farmer brothers near Reading for help when it was most needed. For the two years at Phillips the boy could not afford to make a single trip home, spending his vacations on the charity of Nathaniel Parker, a friend of his father's who lived in nearby Portsmouth. However, Aaron Bancroft found the academy well worth the expense, for his son began to find himself through competent teaching and omnivorous reading. It was hard work, for his preparation had been all too informal and casual; the school motto was *Disce aut Discede*, which the boys translated roughly as "Work or Walk," and Exeter meant it.

Exeter's headmaster, Benjamin Abbot, one of New England's

really great teachers, had gathered about him an excellent staff. Hosea Hildreth, Professor of Natural Philosophy and Mathematics and the father of Richard, later a historian of note, was the oldest and best known of the group — strong-willed and domineering, a great scholar and preacher, with a face that the Boston wit, Robert Treat Paine, said could be broken up into a thousand epigrams. With Abbot and Hildreth four young instructors — Nathaniel Lord, Jonas Wheeler, Henry Holton Fuller, and Henry Ware — made up the teaching staff, one of the best of any of the New England Academies and one which gave the student thorough training in the foundation studies: language, mathematics, philosophy, religion, and composition. Dignified and kindly, with the habit of doffing his hat to every boy he met, Abbot by his own interest in learning set an example to his students. He was skilled with boys, knowing how to gain their respect and friendship, how to force the best from them. In a time when a schoolmaster's authority was usually contingent upon the strength of his right arm, Abbot governed his boys with a shake of the head, a tap of the rule on the desk, or an accusing wave of the hand, although his rarely-given corporal punishments were famous for generations as no light afflictions, but substantial, thorough, and satisfying to giver and receiver Abbot took the young Bancroft boy under his personal care, and Bancroft never forgot him or his kindness, recalling his "incomparable preceptor" seventy years later with affection. Naturally serious and studious, he repaid the headmaster's friendship and his father's trust by becoming one of the academy's best students. Despite his youth — he was the third youngest boy in school — he carried off the Latin and Greek prize during his second year, a book titled *Elements of Criticism*, and as a result he became one of the beneficiaries of the scholarship fund set aside by John Phillips for precisely such poor but promising students

Exeter's first-year course was intended to give the boys a knowledge of the classic fundamentals — Latin grammar, Latin prosody, ancient and modern geography, Latin reading and composition, Vergil, English grammar (including "Reading, Writing, Parsing, and Analyzing, and the Correction of Bad English"), English prosody and punctuation, algebra through simple equations. For the second year Bancroft studied Greek grammar, continued his Latin, read Cicero, Delectus, Roman history, the Greek testament, Dalzell's *Collectanea Graeca Minora*, studied Geometry, Plane Trigo-

nometry, Logic, Rhetoric, Forensics, Declamation, and English grammar and composition. Although Abbot and Hildreth had little patience with anything less than complete mastery of each subject, requiring that the boys spend their evenings in unanimous and industrious study, they did not deny them recreation. There were many games the boys could engage in during the summer and spring months· marbles, "four old cat," hare and hounds, and boating on the river. The great event of the winter was the construction of a large snow fort, stocked with hundreds of ice-hardened snowballs, on the academy grounds near the recitation hall. If any bellicose town boys appeared to storm its battlements, as they were traditionally bound to do, a sentry who kept watch day and night rang the bell which hung atop the fort and the academy garrison streamed out to beat off the attack. The military spirit engendered by the War of 1812 kept alive an honorary cadet corps, first organized by young Lewis Cass to commemorate Washington's memory, called the "Washington Whites." Twelve-year-old George Bancroft was awarded a place as a cadet private. Resplendent in white uniform, cockade and plumed military hat, epaulets and braid, he and the other "Whites" escorted the Trustees to and from their annual meetings, gave Abbot a guard of honor on occasions of state, and paraded through the town on national holidays.

Bancroft's two years at Phillips, however, were marked chiefly by long hours of study, for he was intent upon entering college with the best possible record, and his schoolbooks usually accompanied him on his occasional vacations in Portsmouth. Some months before he reached the age of thirteen, having passed the college entrance examination, which asked that the candidate be "able to read Tully, or suchlike Latin author, *extempore,* and make or speak true Latin in verse or prose . . . , and decline perfectly the paradigms of nouns and verbs in the Greek tongue," George Bancroft went to Cambridge to enter Harvard with the freshman class of 1813.

Harvard College, as Bancroft found it, was entering its Augustan age under the direction of John Thornton Kirkland. In 1806 the last trace of the older Calvinist domination had been removed from the college by the election to its presidency of the Reverend Samuel Webber, a mild Unitarian. With the coming of Kirkland as president in 1810 the course of the college toward liberalism was determined.

Kirkland was a product of the Maine coast, the son of a missionary to the Indians, a poor farm boy who had risen by reason of his intellectual gifts to a position of distinction in Massachusetts—Harvard honor graduate of 1789, pastor of Boston's New South Church for sixteen years, honorary Doctor of Divinity from Princeton and Doctor of Letters from Brown, a Unitarian leader of wide repute. Not too liberal nor too conservative, he embodied the Bostonian and Federalist conception of the ideal scholar and clergyman, sound yet progressive, one of the "old-fashioned New England divines softening down with Arminianism" that Oliver Wendell Holmes remembered with affection from his boyhood Kirkland himself was a competent but not a great scholar, yet he possessed the faculty of exciting others to greatness; it was this ability to inspire others, thought George Ripley, which accounted for the great preponderance of Harvard men in the group of thinkers and artists who were responsible for the New England renaissance that bloomed after his regime at Cambridge had ended.

Under Kirkland's direction and until his retirement in 1828 Harvard's growing reputation for learning began to draw students from beyond the confines of New England, giving the college an air of cosmopolitanism, wealth, and urbanity that it had never before possessed under more conservative and provincial rule. The aristocratic youth of the South began to come to Cambridge, objects of great admiration to the Yankee boys by reason of their proud manners, their arrow-pointed swallowtail coats, and their delicate calfskin boots. But although a few favored young men from rich Bostonian and Southern families could afford to give graduation dinners to five hundred guests under a marquee in the Yard, the backbone of the college was in Bancroft's time still the horny-handed, serious-minded lad from the rural district, fitted for college by study at home, at country school, and with the local clergyman, earnest country boys who formed a type of student body into which the son of the poor Worcester pastor fitted naturally. The enrollment of Harvard was scarcely more than that of a large academy, never more than three hundred and fifteen during Bancroft's undergraduate years, and the faculty was small, bringing teachers and students into an intimate relationship Lasting friendships were often formed between instructors and students, and the closest acquaintances of Bancroft's college years were with the younger faculty men.

The cost of an education at Harvard in 1813 was nearly $300 a year, though a poor student could do much to defray a large portion of his expenses by working at one of the numerous petty jobs created by Kirkland to encourage the financially insecure — tutor's freshman, bellringer, wood-carrier, caretaker of lecture halls, and so on. From the state of Massachusetts, too, came an annual subsidy of $2500 for free tuition, and at Kirkland's discretion other college funds might be drawn upon to assist deserving and needy students. Harvard was in many ways a poor man's school; no sincere but penniless boy ever left Cambridge for lack of funds if Kirkland could scrape a few dollars from some cranny of the treasury. Yet at the same time Harvard, remembering its British origins, believed that the student should be a gentleman as well as a scholar, and neglected nothing that might contribute to his social polish The era of societies and clubs was opening when Bancroft came; the Pierian Sodality, the Speaking Club, the Hermetic Society, Hasty Pudding, and Porcellian all were founded after Kirkland's regime began There was time too to read and think, and adequate opportunity to enjoy informal sports or to walk through the lovely Cambridge countryside to "Sweet Auburn" woods, along Brattle Street, or to Fresh Pond. Balls and parties were frequent, excursions to Boston on week-ends quite common, and on occasion Cambridge social life could positively glitter. The aim of the college, however, was never overlooked Classes met every other hour from six in the morning to four in the afternoon five days a week; and on Sunday, worship and study left only a short time for the lighter pleasures.

The prevailing drift of Harvard opinion when Bancroft entered was toward liberalism — too much so for the solid Calvinists and Congregationalists of the old school who lamented its defection from the ranks of the traditionalists and who often sent their sons elsewhere. In the rural districts as well as in Boston there was some headshaking over Harvard's liberal theological tendencies, and behind Worcester in the Connecticut Valley farm country the less liberal clergy, while not denying the Harvard faculty knowledge, suspected them of being "close Pharisees, resting on head knowledge." Actually Harvard was not, in Bancroft's time, as liberal as it seemed and as it later became. Kirkland could hardly have been labelled dangerous, and Norton, "the Unitarian Pope," while certainly not in sympathy with the old Calvinism, was by nature a

reactionary and a dogmatist, destined to become the great defender of conservative Unitarianism against the younger rebels of transcendentalism Harvard, said its divinity faculty, disavowed any intention of training Unitarian ministers, claiming instead that it placed "students of divinity under the most favorable circumstances for inquiring for themselves into the doctrines of revelation," and there was not a book on Professor Ware's reading list for divinity students that any Calvinist might criticize But after 1815 the conservative churches, noting that Unitarians came out of Harvard with increasing regularity, trained their pastors at Andover. They did not realize that Kirkland, Norton, and Ware taught theology, not Unitarianism, nor did they realize that the young men, living in an atmosphere charged with the religious excitement that was sweeping New England, could hardly have turned out otherwise Harvard's liberalism was partly the result of the times.

However, Harvard under Kirkland was at the opening of a period of greatness It was nearly two hundred years old when Bancroft entered, but with the exception of its early presidents, few men on its staff had received any but an American education and fewer any but a Harvard one. It had become proudly provin- [illegible] rkland's election [illegible] om Germany, be- [illegible] *l'Allemagne,* in translation, started to circulate about the time Bancroft came. A brilliant young student named George Ticknor read it, and with it some booklets by Charles de Villers describing the German university of Göttingen Another scholar, Edward Everett, Bancroft's tutor in Latin, read it; like Ticknor he developed an intense curiosity concerning the fascinating country it described, from which came stories of tremendous erudition and prodigies of scholarship Their enthusiastic interest in Germany infected Kirkland, and in 1814 when Samuel Eliot of Boston endowed a professorship of Greek literature with twenty thousand dollars, the progressive-minded president recognized the opportunity. The position was offered to Everett, with the suggestion that he study abroad at full salary to fit himself for the chair. Everett sailed for Germany in 1815, to return two years later trained in the best traditions of European scholarship. Ticknor went with him; later Joseph Green Cogswell; and still later George Bancroft followed them. Everett

became the greatest classical scholar in America, Ticknor the father of modern language study in America, Cogswell the first great American librarian, and Bancroft the first great American historian — irrefutable evidence that Kirkland's awareness and openmindedness repaid Harvard well, for through him and his students Harvard came into touch with European thought for the first time since its early years

During Bancroft's college years progress came swiftly to Harvard. Fifteen new professors were soon appointed (making twenty-five in all), the theological and law schools were organized, the first endowed chairs were established, and the pioneer European-trained scholars were added to the faculty. Kirkland endeavored in every way possible to elevate the standard of education in the university and to extend and multiply accommodations for learning. He raised salaries, enlarged the library, increased the college endowment, hired new faculty members, and in general left nothing undone that might improve the university's facilities Physically, as well, the college was changing when Bancroft entered. Divinity Hall and the Medical College in Boston were built; Holden Chapel, Harvard, Stoughton, Hollis, and Massachusetts Halls were repaired and modernized. Holworthy Hall, the first to abandon the medieval chamber-and-study arrangement, was ready for occupancy the year before he matriculated, and a year after his arrival University Hall was completed Shortly after his election to the presidency, Kirkland ordered removed the brewing-house, the woodyard, and the numerous privies which dotted the Yard and Commons. The swine in the college pigyard, whose squeals and odors had annoyed generations of students, were transferred to some distance; trees were planted; paths were marked out. After three years of Kirkland's rule, Harvard presented a different air to Bancroft and his class as they entered in 1813 — an atmosphere of enthusiasm and liberalism that imbued the new students with the desire to learn, for Cambridge felt that learning was a very worthy thing. Even the town's sole Irishman, a day-laborer, knew Latin, and the janitor of the new Law School recited Vergil by the minute on slight provocation. The tradition of learning and respect for it was at Harvard a long and powerful one, reaching back to the days when a peck of corn or twelvepence in silver came to the school for its support from many of the freshly cleared farms in the New Eng-

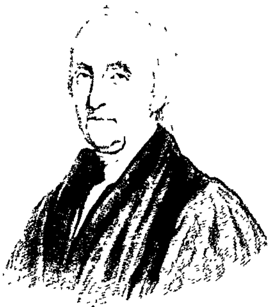
land forests The boy who entered Harvard could not help feeling the weight of the long intellectual past.

Kirkland's was not a large nor an exceptionally distinguished faculty. Dr. Popkin, professor of Greek, who loved the fine dead consistency of the language better than anything else, was famed chiefly as the first man in Cambridge to carry an umbrella. The second man, Professor Levi Hedge in Logic, was intelligent and competent; his son, outdoing his parent, later succeeded in confounding all logic by becoming a pioneer transcendentalist Sidney Willard in Hebrew, Frisbie in Natural Religion, Brazer and Otis in Latin — all were good scholars and capable teachers, though none of them were outstanding. Neither were the Harvard methods of learning particularly enlivening The boys worked hard, siphoning Latin and Greek and mathematics and theology from textbooks by candlelight, and the next day draining it all out again in classes, which were devoted solely to recitation There were no lectures, demonstrations, or comments, for everyone was too interested simply in the absorption of facts and if possible their retention. Such methods may have led in extreme cases to the feeling that English was merely a barbarous tongue in which one bought vegetables at the market, but they did, nevertheless, establish for the students a sound and permanent foundation of scholarship. Except for Andrews Norton, Dexter Professor of Sacred Literature, the men who were to bring Harvard into its full intellectual flowering were still among the students or lodged in minor tutorships in the lower brackets of the faculty. Kirkland's staff was not studded with genius, but it nevertheless had a great deal to offer the serious student, and the president's own progressive attitude, coupled with his intense desire to improve the state of things, pointed clearly toward a coming renaissance. Harvard, despite its apparent static suspension, was intellectually sound, and the professors at least aroused in the young men who sat before them a wish to learn They saw the world of knowledge as stimulating and desirable, a world into which it was worth while to enter In brief, they learned to think for themselves.

With the energy and sincerity of purpose that always characterized him when he was confronted by a book, George Bancroft entered Harvard and for the moment disappeared in the class of 1817. His rooms during his first year were at a Captain Dana's,

for despite the new building program, the college was still cramped for space, and new students frequently lived in private homes until accommodations could be found in a college hall. He seems to have paid little attention to the social life about him; he knew that his business at Harvard was to learn as much as he could in four years as preparation for divinity school and eventually the ministry. There is no record of his indulgence in the sports common to the Delta, a piece of open ground by Memorial Hall — bonecrushing football, cricket, "bat and ball," and the rest. The lightheartedness with which many of his fellow students approached their work shocked him, and he commented sadly in his diary upon the fact that some people would rather read fiction and amuse themselves in sport than closet themselves with a good moral book — a sober thought for a boy somewhat less than fourteen but an appropriate one for a future cleric.

The class of 1817, numbering sixty-seven in all, was one studded with familiar New England names — Samuel Eliot of Boston, later a member of the theological faculty, politician, and treasurer of the Harvard Corporation; Stephen Higginson Tyng of Boston, later a prominent churchman in Washington and Philadelphia; Benjamin Waterhouse of Cambridge, who was ordained in Edinburgh and who served as a clergyman in Kent, England; Alva Woods of Vermont, who became president of Transylvania University in Kentucky and of the University of Alabama; George B. Emerson, who became the administrator of the Boston schools. Among them were many future ministers, such as Benjamin Fessenden of Plymouth and James Green of East Cambridge; lawyers, such as Edwin Fay of Vermont, William Hastings of Billerica, and Richard Farwell of Marlborough; and physicians, such as Samuel Hart of Beverly and Moses Emerson of South Carolina. But young Bancroft, precocious and a trifle shy, kept to himself and to his studies, finding few close friends among his classmates. Stephen Salisbury, a Worcester playmate, remained probably his closest acquaintance, and he struck up a desultory friendship with Caleb Cushing, later his political rival, and with Samuel J May. With small enrollments and close personal relationships, Harvard classes displayed a high degree of class feeling and solidarity that was something more than mere sentiment. Harvard's sons felt their common maternity deeply, and it is testimony to Bancroft's solitary cast of character that he never attended a reunion of the class



AARON BANCROFT



LUCRETIA CHANDLER BANCROFT



EDWARD EVERETT

of '17 until late in life, when success and travel had mitigated his diffidence. In later years Samuel Eliot and he began a lifelong friendship and correspondence, but throughout his college years Bancroft formed few lasting attachments with boys of his own age, finding more pleasure in his studies and in the companionship of his instructors.

Between his father and Dr. Abbot of Exeter the boy had been as well prepared as any of his classmates, better than most, and it took only a short time until his energetic application to his books won him attention from his teachers, who recognized that here was an out-of-the-ordinary mind. He read his Locke in philosophy and had the *Essay on Human Understanding* nearly by heart, as a pre-divinity student should Edward Everett, his Latin tutor, found

Kirkland, who had conferred an honorary degree upon the boy's father three years earlier and who was a Phillips classmate of Benjamin Abbot, naturally was interested in his welfare, for George seemed to be one of those boys for whom Kirkland felt the college existed Before Bancroft became a sophomore his three closest friends at Harvard were Edward Everett, Andrews Norton, and President Kirkland. In the winter of 1813 he spent a good many evenings at the president's home, eating from the familiar dish of pears that Kirkland kept for students, listening to the older men talk, and talking with them as he had done with the men in his father's study not many years before.

Everett and Norton, probably the two most learned men at Harvard, were excellent examples for a fourteen-year-old boy Edward Everett was but six years older than Bancroft, and like him a product of Abbot's training at Exeter, a handsome young man with glossy luxuriant hair, piercing eyes, and the face of a scholarly and somewhat etherealized Webster. He had been accounted the most brilliant boy ever to go through Harvard in its long history — a tutor at 19, a full-fledged Boston minister at 20, and the finest classical scholar in New England to boot — a man with a future. He was a trifle conceited, perhaps, and a little pompous, for he had been flattered and honored more than was good for him — Kirkland publicly pronounced him as bearing a close resemblance to the bust of Apollo and Emerson called him "our Cicero" — but

nevertheless he was a charming and friendly young man. Andrews Norton, librarian during Bancroft's first two years and in his last two professor of Biblical Criticism and Sacred Literature, was fourteen years Bancroft's senior, small, slightly built, with a pale face and deep pleasant voice, an aristocrat in blood and bearing. It was believed by the students that when Norton entered Heaven he would look down his high-bred nose at the gathered angels and remark, as he did in class, "A *very* miscellaneous crowd, indeed." Cold and reserved, a man with whom it was difficult to form a close attachment, he was a clear, distinct thinker and a devoutly religious man, a deep scholar in his narrow range and something more than another hard-headed cleric. Twenty years later, when his mind had reached the limits of its development, he was to become the defender of conservative Unitarianism, the opponent of Emerson and Ripley and the enemy of all ideas from Germany, that source of "the latest form of infidelity," transcendentalism. At twenty-eight, at the beginning of his career, he was a stimulating intellectual influence, and Bancroft's guide and friend throughout his college years.

Bancroft remained at Harvard until 1818, spending the twelve months after his graduation in 1817 as a graduate student preparing himself for the ministry. His residence during his second year was at Massachusetts Hall, number 14; during his third and fourth years, Stoughton 22 and Holworthy 4, respectively; and his graduate residence was at the house of Professor Levi Hedge, whose classes in logic he had attended previously. It is difficult to say that his Harvard years were illuminating, or that the training and environment shaped his future career. Finding friendship difficult, he seems to have spent his time primarily in study; philosophy, science, Greek, Latin, astronomy, classic and English literature, and theology received his nearly undivided attention, and as a result he placed high in his class. Had it not been for Caleb Cushing he might have carried off first honors; but as it was, he and Cushing divided the scholastic rewards about equally. At the Annual Exhibition of 1816, Bancroft delivered the chief oration, "The Influence of Enthusiasm on Happiness," while Cushing was one of six who demonstrated mathematical and astronomical exercises. But on the occasion of President Monroe's visit to Cambridge in 1817, it was Cushing who delivered the Latin Address of Welcome. Both boys were chosen for Phi Beta Kappa, though at commencement

Francis Winthrop won the valedictory, Bancroft and Cushing tying for second place Cushing was awarded the honor of the Latin salutation — he seems to have been the better Latinist — while Bancroft delivered the second oration, titled mightily "The Dignity and Utility of Philosophy of the Human Mind." The small, slender seventeen-year-old handled his theme in what the Boston *Advertiser* thought was "pure, correct, and manly style."

The surviving records testify to the seriousness of his mind and the intensity of his purpose His astronomical thesis, *Invenire Modum Verum Nodorum Lunae*, headed by beautifully decorated Gothic letters, with its finely inscribed border and accompanying Latin verses, betokened his careful and precise methods of work. His notebook, filled with specimens of his composition exercises, illustrated the surprising breadth of his scholarly interests at fifteen and sixteen. Under the heading of February 25, 1815, he discussed Horace's maxim, *Dimidium facti, qui cepit, habet*, beginning, "In this sententious maxim, hath Horace the Prince of Lyrick poetry *presented to our view the difficulty of beginning.* But why is it so arduous to begin, as to complete an enterprise?" Later, on the anniversary of Bunker Hill, he presaged his life-long devotion to American history by patriotic verse, proclaiming the fitness of the past of his native land as a subject for great literature:

> 'Tis said the Indians, tho' a barb'rous horde,
> Will noble subjects to our bards afford. . .

After calling off a mouthfilling list of Indian names (antedating Longfellow's *Hiawatha* by nearly forty years) he concluded.

> Caun-bat-ant, Caw-na-come, Qua-de-qui-na,
> Squant-o, Woo-sam-e-quen, and Manida,
> O pleasing sounds! harmonious names like these,
> Would grace Pope's numbers and give Waller ease!

The fact that Bancroft was preparing himself for the ministry was well known to his Harvard friends, and the young man's talents and seriousness of purpose convinced Norton and Kirkland that he would indeed be a valuable addition to the New England pulpit. His mind ran in the approved channels, there was nothing of the rebellious about him; the way he threw himself into the study and acceptance of orthodox beliefs laid at rest any fears that his men-

tors might have had concerning his soundness of judgment. Andrews Norton especially respected him more and more as his college years drew to a close; the boy's intellect was as hard and sharp as his own, and as little given to airy speculation. He followed the tortuous turnings of early nineteenth-century theology as if born to it, as indeed he was, and he plowed through the polemics of theological controversy with keen intellectual pleasure. Certainly, it seemed to Norton, the boy was equipped by nature for the ministry, and, if his college record was any indication, for a high place in that profession. If anything, Norton must have wondered whether or not the boy was too reactionary. In his junior year he chanced on Jonathan Edwards' *Freedom of the Will,* a book that should have aroused him to opposition and argument. Edwards' defense of predestination, a formulation and a justification of eighteenth-century Calvinism and the greatest philosophical monument to that dying faith, however, so fascinated and convinced him with its intricate network of logic (it had been said that if one accepted Edwards' first proposition one must accept perforce the entire remainder of his argument, so perfect was his logic) that throughout his life, no matter how difficult its reconciliation with his changing beliefs, he clung to the statement that "Edwards' was his creed."

When his protégé won second prize in the Bowdoin essay contest during his senior year, Norton's heart swelled with pride, for the subject of the essay, and the ideas contained in it, justified the elder man's faith in Bancroft's brilliant future in the church. Choosing as his topic "The Use and Necessity of Revelation," the youthful divinity student developed his thought along strictly traditional lines Man actually, he began, had achieved little in the way of knowledge, and compared with that of the Supreme Intelligence, human intellect was weak and frail; the human brain could not and never would be able to fathom the mysteries of the great First Cause. Continuing, he displayed the proper contempt for the Newtonians and their reliance on the human reason as a medium for the acquisition of religious knowledge — the deists had simply ". . . deified the power of gravity . . . , resorting to this principle for a full explanation of the constitution and admirable harmony of the universe." Having thus demolished the propriety of a purely rational religion, he undid in a moment the entire work of the Great Awakening, dismissing in a sentence or so those evan-

gelical, mystical faiths which proclaimed "truths that their own vast minds have developed," those "enlightened understandings which preclude the necessity of Divine interference to correct the religious opinions of mankind." He concluded the preamble to his essay with the words: "We contend, on the contrary, for the necessity of a revelation. We believe that reason can give us neither clear nor distinct views of the character and moral government of God, nor a full assurance of the immortality of the soul, nor a perfect system of practical philosophy"

The body of his essay was taken up, in a manner reminiscent of the close-packed reasoning of Edwards, with the proof of his contention Belief in revelation was a theological necessity, he explained, "for the human powers are incapable of discovering and [illegible]

an ethical necessity since "the world needs a *divine* teacher to give authority to moral precepts."

The whole performance proved that the great drift of liberalism, and even his father's own faith, had passed him by. It was exactly what might have been expected of an earnest seventeen-year-old who had fallen under the spell of Edwards' logic. There was not an idea in it to which any orthodox Massachusetts clergyman, or any eighteenth-century Calvinist for that matter, might have taken exception Ironically, the author was to spend the rest of his life denying it. The young conservative, to reverse Emerson's epigram, became the adult radical.

The signs of promise displayed by young Bancroft convinced Kirkland and Norton that it was worth while to give him, as far as possible, all the advantages of training that they could offer. To all purposes guaranteed a brilliant career in the ministry, the boy was bound to reflect honor upon Harvard as Everett had done, and he would undoubtedly be of great value to the college as an instructor when his training was completed — Kirkland was always alert to any means of improvement for his faculty. Everett's years of foreign study had repaid Harvard tenfold, and Ticknor's future looked equally promising. Joseph Green Cogswell, now abroad on the same mission, sent back laudatory accounts of his experiences Accordingly it was announced that Mr. George Bancroft, "a young man of distinguished powers and of a pure and firm character,"

would be sent to Göttingen in Germany for two or three years, there "to perfect his knowledge in the ancient languages. . . ."

The young graduate did not doubt that a year or so of study in Germany was eminently desirable. Edward Everett had brought back with him glowing tales of German scholarship The names of the Germans rolled from Everett's tongue — Dissen, the Greek scholar, who had studied Greek sixteen hours a day for eighteen years; Wolf, whose theory of the multiple authorship of Homer [illegible] some twenty years before, [illegible] Ger-man, dactyl for dactyl, [illegible] hundredth line and defied all Germany to complete [illegible] tion; Eichhorn, whose Biblical criticism frightened the theologians, and who read Sanscrit as easily as he read the morning papers; and others, equally great.

Aaron Bancroft, however, was not so certain of the desirability of foreign study. Stories of the German theological scholars, of their lack of piety, of their irreverence and disbelief, were common talk in New England, and he was fearful of the effect of a too sudden exposure to continental society upon a young and impressionable mind. Goethe's irregularities, both personal and literary, were widely known and discussed in Boston, and the "immoralities" of *Werther* seemed to many to outweigh by far the literary merit it clearly possessed If all Germans were of the Goethe stamp, their company was not fit for a Massachusetts boy with a clerical career in mind, or so the elder Bancroft felt inclined to believe. However, as far as anyone could tell, Germany had not seriously affected either Everett or Ticknor — in fact, Everett's erudition was matched only by his gentlemanliness — but the results might not be the same in the case of an eighteen-year-old lad whose experience had been so limited as to make him easy prey to that skepticism and moral laxity for which the German universities were notorious.

The prestige of President Kirkland, however, lent respectability to the proposal, and it was plain to the Bancroft family that any offer made by the president of Harvard could hardly be rejected. At the spring meeting of the Massachusetts Congregational clergy in Boston, Aaron approached George Cabot, whose word, as both a minister of the church and a Cabot, he felt should carry authority. Cabot emphatically approved. "His opinion was positive and clear, without reservation or qualification," Aaron reported to his son,

who added, "I, like Mr. Cabot, had never a moment of hesitation." Andrews Norton, too, felt some misgivings concerning the scholarship, for he knew the boy had the makings of a great clergyman, and if perverted by contact with Europe, his keen mind and admirable piety might never return to grace a New England pulpit. Norton, in the midst of writing an article on Benjamin Franklin for the *North American Review,* found it necessary to call on John Adams for verification of certain facts, and seized upon the opportunity to obtain the opinion of the sturdy old Federalist concerning the advisability of an American studying abroad. Young George went with him to Quincy, where the crusty old man, tart and wrinkled as a winter apple, was finishing out his life in ill-suppressed impatience with the state of the nation

Adams met them at the door of his home, a slight old man dressed in severe black. The boy never forgot the visit, and sixty years later the sharp nasal twang of the ex-President and the crackle of his newly-starched stock were as fresh in his ears as on that May morning in 1818 Norton explained his business and introduced Bancroft, "a young man bound for Göttingen." What did President Adams think of the plan for study abroad? Adams was definite and dogmatic — it was best for young men to be educated in their own country He was a believer in avoiding the manners and affectations of Europe, and from what he had seen of continental society it was no fit environment for a young theologian.

Despite the adverse opinion of John Adams and the doubts clouding his father's mind, Bancroft himself felt no fear of the possibility of being refused parental permission to accept Kirkland's offer The great flood of German thought was beginning to wash at the shores of New England, a vast and relatively uncharted sea of knowledge, opening to the intellectual explorer a prospect as alluring as any which faced Drake, Magellan, or Columbus It was as if America was soon to discover the existence of a new continent, inhabited by a previously unknown race of men, with a new philosophy, a new literature, a new criticism, a new and greater theology. Earlier in the spring, fired by Everett's example, Bancroft began studying German, heretofore considered a barbaric tongue, of little more worth to the classical or divinity student than Choctaw.

Learning German in Cambridge presented a problem in itself. Ticknor, in 1814, had received some tutoring from an Alsatian in-

Jamaica Plain. Alexander Everett dug out for him an old grammar, and in New Hampshire he found a dictionary. John Quincy Adams had a copy of Goethe's *Werther* to puzzle out; Moses Stuart at Andover and Dr. Bentley, the Unitarian minister at Salem, owned some German books, and Everett and Cogswell had purchased some abroad for the Harvard library a few years before. The difficulty was that at Cambridge no one spoke German readily. Professor Sidney Willard read the language fairly well, but, himself self-taught, had little notion of its pronunciation. Willard offered to help Bancroft, and the two spent their evenings in April and May of 1818 with a grammar book, a lexicon, and a reader, translating English into German by way of Greek and back again.

In May, however, Aaron Bancroft finally gave his consent and prepared for his son's departure. With him, it was decided, Bancroft was to take Frederic, Professor Hedge's son, who at twelve was too young for Harvard and who was to attend a good school in Germany under Bancroft's direction. Since it was obvious that the family was incapable of giving George much financial assistance, Kirkland turned to other sources of revenue, and on June 25, 1818, the Overseers of Harvard College voted that "Mr. George Bancroft, about to go abroad to pursue his theological studies, be entitled to receive a moiety of the proceeds of Madam Mary Saltonstall's donation, for the year beginning 1 July, 1818." The "moiety," supplemented no doubt by other funds available to Kirkland for scholarships, amounted to perhaps $700 a year. For $550 or less, Kirkland thought, a student at Gottingen could procure a respectable and comfortable situation for a year, leaving ample provision for books, travel, and incidentals. Aaron Bancroft and George's brother John added nearly $500, and on June 27, 1818, George Bancroft, the minister's son who had never been more than a hundred miles from Boston, set sail for Europe. Before he returned he would know Berlin and Paris, Rome and London, talk with Goethe and Lafayette, lunch with Byron, and walk in the Paris moonlight with Washington Irving. Cambridge had seen the last of the shy, scholarly youth who hoped to spend his life in expounding and defending the Bible, and granite-minded Andrews Norton the last of the earnest, worshipful lad who had touched his heart more deeply than anyone would ever suspect. George Bancroft, literally and figuratively, set sail from New England, and in spirit he never returned to it.

CHAPTER TWO

The American Scholar Abroad 1818–1823

GEORGE BANCROFT'S voyage was spent in plans for making full use of the opportunity afforded him by Kirkland and Norton. Although he must have realized that the admonition was totally unnecessary, knowing Bancroft's character, President Kirkland took no chances that his young friend might forget his duty, and wrote to Professor Eichhorn at Gottingen that Bancroft was intended to become "an accomplished theologian and Biblical critic, able to expound and defend the Revelations of God." This and other letters of introduction awaited the traveler at Leyden, where he landed on August 4, and his letters from there and from The Hague expressed his trepidation at the strange people and manners he found about him. Everett, in a letter awaiting the youth at Amsterdam, warned him to expect habits and customs that would amaze him, particularly in regard to European standards of cleanliness, telling him that "in going from Holland to Germany, you go from a clean country to a dirty one, and you must make up your mind to inconveniences." Even with Everett's words of advice fresh in mind, the young man was bewildered and homesick. "Surely a residence of three years must change my manners and habits of character," he wrote Norton earnestly. "If it makes me unworthy . . . I believe there are some who love me enough to regret it; but by none would it be so lamented as by myself."

On August 14 he arrived in Göttingen, the city of Georgia Augusta and the seat of the most renowned university in Germany. The foreign city, ill-paved and dimly lit, with its crooked streets and unfamiliar architecture, made him think nostalgically of Boston. A few days before, a passenger on the coach told him, the students had rioted, breaking windows and caning shopkeepers,

and the city had been restored to order only after the arrival from Hanover of troops who fired on the mob. Bancroft half-expected to see the city armed to the teeth, but the streets were quiet. He found two rooms in the student quarter on "a fine wide street, the first in the city," rooms probably vacated by expelled students, and the next morning walked out to find Professor Benecke, the faculty member in charge of English-speaking students, a crotchety old fellow who was to tutor him in German for the next two months.

Since the new term at the university did not open until the 29th of September, Bancroft placed young Hedge in school in Göttingen and resolved to spend the intervening weeks learning conversational German, reading as widely as he could in the German classics, and familiarizing himself with the Göttingen system, quite different from that of Harvard. Benecke allowed him an hour a day for his tutoring, carefully watching the clock and cutting the American off in the middle of a sentence, or even of a long word, when the minute hand reached the hour. After his morning lesson with Benecke, he went to his rooms to read diligently in Goethe and Schiller, particularly in Goethe, whose "immorality and indecency" pained his proper New England conscience. "He appears to prefer to represent vice as lovely and exciting sympathy," Bancroft wrote in his journal, "and would rather take for his heroine a prostitute or a profligate."

In the evenings he often called at the homes of the professors to whom he had letters of introduction from Kirkland and Everett, finding that the fact that he came from America was enough to secure him an entry into the homes of most German scholars. The Göttingen of 1818 was as intensely interested in the United States as America was in Germany. Christoph Daniel Ebeling of Ham-

plete social, political, and cultural history of the United States, and his work was well known at Göttingen. Ebeling's close friends among the scholars, Heeren, Benecke, Blumenbach, and others, had a great curiosity about American affairs, and Bancroft's predecessors had further cemented friendly relations by their interest in learning and their extremely pleasant manners. Blumenbach, a renowned physiologist and the man who first conceived the plan of classifying the animal kingdom on the basis of structure, wel-

comed him at once. Everett had been a good friend of the professor during his stay at Gottingen, and his letter of introduction (*"sehr gottlich,"* said Madame Blumenbach admiringly) immediately made the Massachusetts lad a member of the family. Another letter from Everett proved a passport to the house of Dissen, under whom Bancroft intended to take Greek — "a short man, extremely near-sighted, wonderfully learned, very kind and obliging."

Bancroft had been sent to Göttingen to pursue the study of theology, so that, as Kirkland's letter phrased it, he might better be able "to expound and defend the Revelation of God." What course of study, he asked himself, might best further that aim? Philology, Dissen told him, would require at least three years of preparatory study in the necessary languages, and the study of classical literature promised equally little hope in the way of Scriptural interpretation during the short time allotted him His plan, he finally told Everett, was therefore to gain "a fair degree of acquaintance with the classics, and that chiefly in view of understanding them," and then "to strike off into the wide region of Oriental Literature . . , knowledge valuable in itself, necessary to accomplish a theologian, and much wanted in America" For his first term of study he planned to hear Dissen on Greek, Koster on Hebrew grammar, Welcker on Latin, and either Planck's history or Eichhorn's New Testament Planck, students told him, spoke swiftly and in a low tone, so that even German students often lost much of his lecture, on the other hand, Eichhorn's skepticism and his unorthodox interpretation of the Bible were well known. "I am very desirous of knowing Eichhorn," he wrote Everett, "yet I should be unwilling to give my friends any reasonable ground for fearing I should lose my belief in, or respect for Christianity"

The upshot of the matter was that the next morning, September 13, Bancroft introduced himself to Eichhorn From Jena, where young Samuel Taylor Coleridge had studied with him, Eichhorn had come to Göttingen as professor of oriental languages with a distinguished career behind him and a reputation as a dangerous thinker to precede him Authority in theology, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, history, and philosophy, author of the great unfinished *Allgemeine Geschichte der Kultur und Litteratur des neuren Europa,* he was found by the young American to be "old, yet stout and hearty, very strongly built, of fine proportions, broad shoulders, tall enough, with a fine open countenance, good natured in

his manners, and familiar." He shook the student warmly by the hand, inquired after his health and living quarters, spoke of Everett with high praise, and of America's "gigantick strides of improvement," adding with a wink "that she was dreaded by England." Bancroft spoke of his intention to pursue the study of oriental languages as an aid to theology. "I invite you," said Eichhorn "You shall have the best place in the lecture room." Bancroft left with the scholar's invitation to repeat his visit, and an increased desire to study with Eichhorn — not a dangerous man at all, but an affable, kindly old fellow.

In late September the New England boy formally matriculated at the University of Göttingen It was a simple process — he gave his name, his country, his father's occupation, and the studies to which he intended to devote himself. The Prorector handed him a paper bestowing upon him the rights of a citizen of Georgia Augusta, shook his hand, and he became a student, bound by the laws of Gottingen to preserve a good character and pure morals, to appear always neatly dressed, and to avenge an injury by duel. "The doors of the University stand open," he wrote, "and all are invited to partake of the rich banquet of learning." Eighty learned professors and a "vast number" of instructors waited to teach him: "Of all this I can take my choice," he told his father earnestly, "and accordingly I have selected the best. . . ."

By mid-October he was deep in study. Everett, during his residence at Göttingen, allowed himself but six hours of sleep a night, reserving from fifteen to eighteen hours a day for study. Bancroft's schedule was nearly as heroic. He rose at five to study and drink coffee until nearly seven, when he cut himself a piece of brown bread from a loaf in his desk drawer. At seven-ten he began an hour's tutoring in German with Benecke, followed by an hour of study until Eichhorn's lectures on the New Testament at nine. From ten to eleven he studied Hebrew with Köster, and until noon he attended the Philological Seminarium, an advanced seminar dealing with translation from Latin and Greek At twelve dinner came to him in his room, and a short walk took up the time until one, when he studied in the library. Latin with Welcker at two and Greek with Dissen at three finished the day of classes, and Bancroft went to his room to study from four until midnight — a routine which left some students broken in health and half-blind. The German attitude toward study was far different from that of

Cambridge. A youth, said Eichhorn, might study twelve hours daily without injury to himself, and fifteen to sixteen hours was not at all unhealthy for the mature student "It is a fixed principle that cannot be denied," he told Bancroft, "that no man naturally possessed of a good constitution ever died of study."

Occasionally Bancroft broke the monotony by an evening visit to a beer-hall, where the students, with their flat cloth caps on their heads, ate and drank, shouted, fought, and roistered. He preferred more often to call on one of his professors, where, he told his mother, they served small cakes and tea laced with rum, "Yes, my dear mother, *rum*, a substance which the old ladies find tastes very well in tea." The Sunday evening balls intrigued him, and he learned to waltz, warning his family that he seemed to be becoming quite "Germanized" But certain customs shocked the young New Englander — the lack of polished manners, the propensity to indulge in strong drink, the absence of religious feeling The language of the good and pious German ladies seemed blasphemous to the son of a Massachusetts minister. Even the most respectable women were quite profane, he told Norton. "I thank you very much for recommending to me a charming book, *La nouvelle Heloise*," he once said to a young woman at a tea "By God, I never recommended it to you, by God I did not," she replied. "I assure you by the Lord Jesus in Heaven I never spoke of it to you" *Ach Gott, Ach der Herr Gott, allmachter Gott, ach, du lieber Gott, ach, du Herr Jesus* — such expressions seemed on the tongue of every woman in Gottingen. It is not surprising that he told his Aunt Sally Stanton, who had inquired with some anxiety after the state of his affections, "There is not one single girl in Gottingen who is pretty, or very sensible, or very accomplished . . . There is, indeed, little or nothing to interest the feelings"

In January, 1819, after a winter of hard, grinding study, Bancroft took stock of himself Was he proceeding properly? He asked Kirkland:

> You charged me on leaving you to become a biblical critic and a philologian, but to be good in either of these branches I must devote myself particularly to one of them, and carry on the other as a mere secondary affair. Which of them shall I choose?

Kirkland, suspicious of German biblical criticism, advised him to continue with his study of oriental languages, "provided it will

not expose you to any other evil." Bancroft quieted the misgivings of his sponsor immediately, writing: "I trust I have been too long under your eye, and too long a member of the theological institution under your inspection to be in danger of being led away from the religion of my Fathers. . . ."

By degrees Bancroft became more accustomed to life in Germany, although he filled his letters home with disapproving comments concerning the "wretchedly rough manners" of the students and professors. The students were "rough, uncivilized, and without cultivation," they were "wild and noisy, awkward and slovenly." The classroom seemed to him "a collection of prodigious odors," and the whistling, shouting, and confusion of the lecture-hall amazed him, the students wore "dirty monstrous Beards," and scraped their feet on the lecture-room's sandy floor to express disapproval — the professors, to his astonishment, minded not at all. Furthermore, he informed Andrews Norton, he attended in February a supper given by the Prorector of the University for the faculty, from which, when the wine ran out and not before, "each made the best of his way home, the skins of the professors pretty full." He did not allow his distaste for Göttingen social life to deter him from his studies, and in the spring of 1819 widened his course to include Syriac, ethnography, and church history, the first taught by Eichhorn, the second by the great classic historian Arnold Heeren, whom he was to admire more and more as time went on, and the last by the elder Planck. By June he knew German well enough to discontinue the tutoring lessons with Benecke, and to preach sermons in the newly acquired tongue at some of the country churches beyond the town.

"What have I done since coming to Germany? I have learnt much, very much," he wrote, "actually more than I had dared hope." His teachers accounted him a fit successor to Edward Everett, no mean praise, and he deserved the credit. He had improved, in ten months, his knowledge of Greek and German, had tripled his knowledge of Latin, had begun Hebrew and Syriac, and had read widely in German theology and literature. Norton and Kirkland complimented him on his progress, and in May Joseph Green Cogswell of Harvard stopped at Gottingen to see him. Cogswell, who had gone to Germany with Everett and Ticknor as one of the group called *die neuen Amerikaner*, was nearly finished with his studies, and was loud in his praise of the younger man's work. The

two Americans struck up a close friendship during Cogswell's short visit, and began a regular correspondence. "There are few men on earth that I have seen as yet," the younger man told Norton, "who please me so well as Cogswell"

By the autumn months a note of uncertainty began to creep into Bancroft's letters to Cambridge, uncertainty as to his future, his choice of a profession, and his creed. Despite the fact that Harvard had sent him abroad to pursue theological studies, that he had upon his arrival at Göttingen sincerely and energetically applied himself to all those studies which were intended to produce a clergyman, and that he had deliberately determined to remain unaffected by any prevailing skepticism or disinterest in religion, Bancroft wrote Everett in August: " 'Tis out of the question to expect that in any American university whatsoever the station of Professor of Theology would be offered me or anyone else, who had got his theology in Germany." He possessed enough theological training for any American pulpit, and felt convinced that further study at Göttingen would do him little good.

The possibility of becoming a schoolteacher upon his return to America intrigued him as a way of applying his education in a fashion which might give some benefit to his country, and which might earn him money if the ministry were closed to him. Bancroft, who had promised to visit young Hedge occasionally, observed with some interest the novel methods of the school the boy attended. What did Everett think, he asked, of Bancroft's setting up in Massachusetts an experimental secondary school patterned after the German *Schulwesen* — "Will you say a word on this point, when you have time?" For the first time Bancroft doubted his choice of a profession, and despaired of successfully occupying a Massachusetts pulpit; Europe was beginning to have its effect on the young New Englander. In New England a minister did not waltz, drink rum in his tea, translate romantic German lyrics, or wear velvet trousers, and he was afraid that he was beginning to like such things.

Everett's reply, that he saw no objection to Bancroft's shift of emphasis from theology to the classics or to history, came as the University suspended for the autumn holidays Bancroft, eager to make the most of his free time and to see as much of Europe as possible while unencumbered by study, set off with three German friends on a walking tour that took them as far as Prague. To him

the journey through the strange old German towns was a delightful one. The boys trudged through Halle and Leipzig, stopping to present letters of introduction to scholars in the various cities along their route, to Gesenius, Spohn, and others, all of whom, Bancroft recorded, asked after Everett and Ticknor, *die neuen Amerikaner.* By chance in Dresden he met Cogswell, there on a visit, and with him toured the art galleries, his first exposure to the world of painting and sculpture. But the high point of the tour came on the return trip, when Bancroft visited Jena and Weimar. At Jena he saw Goethe, and at Weimar Goethe's home.

Goethe's reputation in New England at the time was none too savory, and few men in America knew him well — even Emerson, ten years later, felt that he "could not stand the old gentleman's immorality." Everett, in 1817, had helped alleviate some of the American misunderstanding of the poet by a short survey of his life and art in the eminently respectable pages of the *North American Review,* but in general the opinion of the Cambridge men was that of Bancroft, who wrote in his journal some months before his visit to Jena:

> I do not love Goethe He is too dirty, too bestial in his conceptions There is nothing of a noble, high, enthusiastic soul in him His genius is admirable His knowledge of life wonderful But the whole is spoilt by the immorality of his writings, by the vulgarity of his characters.

Stories about the poet circulated widely and persistently in Germany, as well as in America. Bancroft heard a typical tale, one of Goethe's mistress by whom he had a son — "a woman very disgusting in her manners, who died of intemperance, i e , of drinking gin." But the man whom he met at noon in the garden of his Jena home on October 12 seemed to him a gentle old man, with "a fine clear eye, large and very expressive features, well built, and giving at once a favorable impression " The poet wore a surtout with no waistcoat, and Bancroft noted that his shirt was soiled. Yet, he told his sister Jane, "He had an air of majesty about him, and his grey locks made him look so respectable that I wondered how I could mind such a trifle as his dress."

Goethe was friendly and talkative, for he liked young Americans. After some conversation on common affairs, Bancroft mentioned his study of German philosophy; "Kant," he said later,

"Goethe mentioned with reverence." Goethe preferred, however, to talk of America, the new land he had never seen, and surprised the youth with his knowledge of it, speaking of several books he had recently read, such as Worden's *Statistical Account of America*. Cogswell had given him an essay on American literature from the *Edinburgh Review,* and Goethe expressed interest in the state of letters beyond the Atlantic — Cogswell, said the poet, was a particular friend of his, a *lieber Mann*. At length, gathering courage, Bancroft took occasion to mention the British poets of whom he wished particularly to hear the German speak. The name of Byron sprang to Goethe's tongue. "I am one of a large party in Germany who admire him unboundedly and swallow everything that comes from him" Did not Byron, asked Bancroft, forgetting the common contemporary criticism of *Faust,* often mix splendid poetry with gross indecency? Goethe defended the Englishman of the charge, seeming not to notice the young man's embarrassment, which grew as he mentioned Byron's unfortunate marital entanglements, failing to remember the many stories of Goethe's own Of Scott Goethe talked in complimentary terms — of Wordsworth and Southey he knew nothing, Bancroft noted with some surprise, and of Coleridge he remembered only having heard the name. Thus for half an hour the nineteen-year-old son of a Massachusetts minister chatted with the stormiest genius of European letters.

As Bancroft prepared to depart, he mentioned that he intended to stop in Weimar. "Here," said Goethe, "you must visit the library," and quickly scratched out a letter of introduction to the city librarian, one Krauter. He left the poet in his garden and walked toward Jena, some ten miles away, revising his opinions Certainly this white-haired old man in the soiled shirt could not be the ogre Norton and Kirkland had warned him against The Weimar library Bancroft found to be magnificent, and Krauter rather officious and dull. Krauter had his uses, however, for upon reading Goethe's note of introduction, he offered to take the youth to Goethe's home. Only Frau Kammerathin von Goethe was at home in the afternoon, but she invited him to tea in the evening, where he met Ottilie, Goethe's daughter-in-law, "a very pretty little woman, of lively, sprightly manners, witty and agreeable." Goethe's son seemed "a stupid, ignorant fellow," and Bancroft left him in time to attend the theater, one of the handsomest in Germany.

In late October Bancroft was back once more at his books in Gottingen, working hard, but with little definite idea of his future — he gave up for the moment the idea of entering the ministry, for theology interested him less and less and the classics took up more and more of his time. Even the facilities for oriental studies at Göttingen were not of the best, he complained, and if he failed to receive a pulpit upon his return to New England, of what use was Syriac? His walking trip had shown him new places, new and famous people, art, sculpture, the glittering theaters of Weimar and Dresden, the easy and careless cosmopolitanism of the society of European scholars. A poor New England boy, he had talked with Goethe, whose name was known in the four corners of the world, and had sipped tea at his home. Hebrew and Biblical exegesis seemed somewhat tame.

The visit to Goethe fired Bancroft's interest in German literature, and he spent much of his time during the late fall months simply reading — critics, historians, philosophers, poets — and translating laboriously the passionate lyrics of the romantics into extravagant, flowery meters. Schiller's *Fridolin, The Ideals, My Creed, The Skeptics*, Goethe's *Violet, My Goddess, Joy, The Divine, Song of the Captive Count*, Rist's *To a Flower*, Rueckert's *Flower Angels* — these and many other lyrics found their way into the pages of his journal. In his notebooks he drew up carefully a list of his impressions of the German literary tradition, the genesis of a series of studies he was to publish in Walsh's *American Quarterly Review* five years later. To their credit, he believed, the Germans had an accurate criticism, a cultivated state of mind, an originality of intellect, a large body of authors, a good educational system, and a fairly democratic literary society uncontrolled by any literary dictators. To their debit were their propensity to imitate, their lack of a Boston or a London where culture might be centralized, their neglect of artistry in prose style, their commercialism, their lack of dignity and a moral spirit. As literary criticism Bancroft's judgments (concerned primarily with aesthetic generalizations, since the scientific method of criticism was still far in the future) showed a depth of understanding and a catholicity of taste surprising in a lad of twenty who had learned German but two years before. But the fact remained, and Bancroft must have realized it, that his nights should have been spent with Syriac and Hebrew grammars rather than with a volume of Schiller or Goethe.

Criticism of Göttingen appeared more frequently in the youth's letters home; frankly, he was bored with study and with student life during the winter months of 1819 and 1820. He described with distaste the dirty caps and coarse clothes of his fellows — some, he said, "wore shirts of dark cotton without washing them, until they literally fell to rags." Many wore trousers lined on the seat and down the inner part with such leather as in America was used for boots and soles, and, said he, "If I might judge, as of the age of a rattlesnake by the number of his rattles, so of the age of such an article of dress I might judge by the layers of greasy particles of matter which decorate their exterior. . . . In their manners these men are *boors* . . . , they dress, all of them, as no civilized man ought to dress, many of them like barbarians." Class feeling was dominant at the University, wrote the son of democratic New England — there were four classes of students, rich and poor, commoner and aristocrat, and they mixed but seldom. Chastity, he found, was "a word to be laughed at. . . . Waiting maids and ugly women may be seen on the ramparts any fine night, and the students follow them." One woman of eminence told him that the practice of keeping mistresses had been quite fashionable at Gottingen but a few years past, more than twenty of the professors having them Scarcely a girl in the lower classes of Gottingen society, she added, reached her sixteenth year with unimpaired reputation. "An old woman with a half-dozen daughters set up a brothel a few years since in Gottingen," he wrote Norton "She met with little patronage and at length left the town, vowing that nothing was to be got there, for the honest women spoilt the trade."

The student custom of wearing a beard, combined with the continental embrace of greeting, disgusted him, and "to see two of these two-legged animals meet one another in the street and kiss *each other thrice with their dirty beards, faces and all,* kiss each other thrice as lustily as ever Romeo kissed Juliet, this is a sight!" The theological students in particular aroused his ire, for in his opinion they studied for the ministry simply to gain a sinecure, with no idea of the sanctity or sublimity of their profession. The only classes in which he had heard vulgar and indecent jests, said Bancroft, jests that would have "disgraced a jail-yard or a fish-market," were those in theology. The Bible was treated "with little respect, and its narratives are laughed at as an old wife's tale, fit to *be believed in the nursery.*"

With this mood upon him, Bancroft's spring holidays came none oo soon, and in May he was glad to put Göttingen behind him as ie set out on a walking tour through the Harz mountains with an Englishman born in Livonia, a Polish aristocrat, a Hollander, and German student from Hanover, testimony to the cosmopolitan-sm of German university society. The air of the hills and the ani-mating exercise lifted the depression from his mind, and the laily walk of seven or eight leagues helped clear his head of the houghts that bothered him The mountains seemed "charming, very lovely, very pleasant," but "nothing answering to my notions of the sublime, nothing terribly grand or awfully bold." He learned nore from his companions than from the mountains. The "poor American," he felt, "enlarged his knowledge of men and things by being with men from so various parts of Europe" — Michaelow-ki, the Pole, gross, unpolished, fervently patriotic and a bitter hater of Russians; Schimmelpennick, the Dutchman, good-natured, strong, grave, and frank, the Livonian, a true man of the world, with English, French, German, Russian, Italian, and Polish "flow-ng from his lips like honey"; the young Hanoverian baron, loud and a braggart, convinced "the *Deutschen* are above all nations on earth." With these men Bancroft spent three weeks learning what it was to be a European, that one might be a nobleman and wear soiled linens, that one might be scholarly and provincial at the same moment, that wit and sophistication were accounted in some circles as admirable as piety.

During the spring months Bancroft poured out on paper to Nor-ton and Kirkland his criticisms of the German university systems, feeling that as schoolmen they might be particularly interested in and sympathetic toward his growing aversion to Göttingen. He could not respect his teachers, he believed, for anything but their learning, and comparison of them with his Harvard masters made him all the more impatient with his present professors. Eichhorn was lazy; Dissen was goodhearted but dull; it seemed that all Göt-tingen men were immoral, commercial, and rude in manner. He jotted down in his journals a dozen reasons why he had no respect for the German university professor — he was a bookworm, of lower-class origin, with no taste for domestic enjoyment, no man-ners, no niceties of sentiment, no feeling for the beauties of devo-tion. The teacher, even the richer scholar, Bancroft observed, regarded his profession merely as a trade, and wrote for money as a

mechanic might follow his own vocation. The bitterness of his protégé's letters startled Andrews Norton, who expostulated that perhaps the boy judged harshly. "I have not been guilty of exaggeration," was the reply "I have never made an assertion which I was doubtful about, and never expressed a judgment which I did not feel was right"

The arrival of the Fourth of July afforded Bancroft an opportunity to release his pent-up feelings, and with another lonely American student at Gottingen, James Patton of Vermont, he made the eagle scream in satisfactory and patriotic fashion. The Massachusetts lad and the Vermonter held a "banquet," prefaced by the reading of a poem by Patton and a fervid oration by Bancroft. Calling the roll of the great names — Washington, Jefferson, Adams, and the rest — he launched into an account of the national blessings, "the great forests of the west, the hum of business, the vessels of commerce," and more, followed by a series of toasts, enough of them to send the two boys reeling to their rooms They toasted the President, the flag, the American eagle ("a terror to the vulture, may she never wound the lamb"), the memory of Washington, the literary prospects of America, the abolition of slavery, the "sweet nymph Liberty," the heroes of the Revolution, the Fourth of July, the Constitution, the American government, "watered by the dews of Heaven and quickened by the genial warmth of freedom — the nurseries of enlightened patriots" "We are Americans," summarized Bancroft "The arts and sciences of Europe cannot make us forget it. Thank God we are Americans."

[illegible] " dressed in [illegible] in public his nine theses on the ninth of September, 1820, took the oath of honor to the University, and was granted the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. For a week he had gone through the necessary formalities — the petition for the degree, the written history of his life, the oral examination under Eichhorn and seven other faculty members, [illegible]

[illegible] history, Greek, and classic literature, was an ordeal, Bancroft frankly admitted. Mitscherlich, professor of Greek, gave him an ode of Pindar to translate. First the candidate read the sentence,

translating freely. Then each word of the sentence was explained, reduced to its primitive root, and various meanings educed. Next the grammatical construction of the sentence was discussed, and the line translated once more into Latin. (All explanations and discussions took place in Latin, the sole language allowed at any public solemnity of the University) After an hour and a half of labor, Bancroft had succeeded in covering some thirty lines of Pindaric Greek, more than enough to satisfy the exacting Mitscherlich. Following the traditional rules of the University, Bancroft began by having printed for distribution the nine propositions he intended to defend at the public defense of his theses — new and unusual ideas, or discussions of minor points of textual interpretation, such as his seventh proposition, "Bentheii conjectura *mummum* pro *nomen* in Horatii Epist ad Pis. v. 59, altera tamen *procudere* pro *producere* adoptanda." Two opponents, usually friends of the candidate, were then appointed to enter the discussion, and as the appointed day arrived, Bancroft, dressed in black, drove in a carriage, first to the rooms of his opponents and next to the home of Eichhorn, the dean of the faculty, in order to invite them to the defense. At the proper hour Eichhorn, rising on the platform, introduced the young American to the assembly and the debate between candidate and audience began, to last some two hours. The dean of the faculty declaring the defense ended, Bancroft gave his closing oration, received the oath from the Beadle of the University, and became a Doctor of Philosophy. "Now," he wrote proudly to Norton, "the people cry out as I pass, *Doktor, Herr Doktor!*".

Göttingen, Bancroft felt, had given him all that it could, and within a few days after receiving his degree he laid plans for his departure from Georgia Augusta. Further study in Germany ap-

[illegible]

is a little hell, Halle is a place the devil would blush to show his face in." By September 17 he had made up his mind to go to Berlin. Some of the greatest scholars were there to attract him — Boeckh, the historian, whose economic history of Athens had set a new standard in historical writing; Wolf, the Homeric scholar; Schleiermacher, the theologian; Buttmann, the Greek grammarian; and of course the famous Hegel himself. Two days later, at nine o'clock of

the morning of the 19th, Bancroft left Göttingen on foot, walking toward Berlin and the second phase of his intellectual development. He had learned a great deal at Gottingen, and he was willing to acknowledge his debt to the men who had taught him, but he left the university without regret.

Two Greek boys — Maurus of Constantinople and Polyzoides from Thessalonika — accompanied the young American to Berlin, and a large group of Bancroft's German friends escorted the three travelers on their way Little happened on the trip, and in about three weeks, after a leisurely journey through the river and hill towns, Bancroft was settled in the capital city of Prussia, ready to begin a new series of studies. He sensed immediately significant differences between the new University and Gottingen. The Gottingen men had abhorred innovation, whereas the Berlin scholars eagerly adopted new ideas; at Göttingen, Bancroft felt, the aim was to make the students learned, but Berlin wanted them to think. "Here in Berlin," he wrote Kirkland, "a great many new ideas are g [illegible] I am t [illegible]

[illegible] ins of German scholarship held lectures at Berlin. History with Boeckh, philology with Wolf, philosophy with Hegel, and educational theory with Schleiermacher were his final choices. Hegel, however, disappointed him He was unintelligible half the time, Bancroft wrote Everett, and in the other half he seemed to be trying to "make Christianity run on all fours" — he was dreamy, sluggish, and uninspiring. Boeckh was better, but with not half the genius of Wolf, who was "a genius of the first order . . . , but the laziest man I have ever seen, rising after daylight and going to bed at nine" It was rumored that Wolf's morals were not impeccable, and that he was vain, childish, and stubborn But to gentle, mystic, humpbacked Schleiermacher went Bancroft's full-hearted admiration. Speaking from notes in a low tone, nervous, his body racked by stomach spasms, Schleiermacher held the American lad rapt with his talk. The lectures on education were the best he had ever heard, and he honored Schleiermacher above all German scholars, Bancroft told Kirkland. He was "a fine philosopher, a rational, candid, liberal divine, an amiable father and husband, a most industrious, most pious, and most domestic man."

Under the stimulus of Schleiermacher's lectures, the idea of

transplanting to America some of the new educational thought began to take shape again in Bancroft's mind. Ten young Germans, a year before, had established a Pestalozzian school in Berlin. He went to visit it, discussing the possibility of founding an American school on Prussian principles with his friend Wilhelm von Humboldt, who was skeptical of the plan. How would you persuade German scholars to come to the United States to run such a school? asked Humboldt. And furthermore, would German methods fit the temperament of the American boy? Bancroft refused to give up the idea, however, for the Prussian schools, the best in Europe, were worth imitating. They combined gymnastics, music, and science in a way that was wonderful for an admirer of Plato to see; corporal punishment was neither known nor necessary, and the job of a schoolmaster, viewed from the German point of view, seemed to Bancroft a highly attractive position, one well worth considering.

In the meantime he found the social life of Berlin exciting and the company of Berlin scholars stimulating He sat up half the night with von Humboldt, arguing over German poetry and then rushing home to read and translate. He discussed German theology with the British minister, Sir George Rose, and philosophy with Savigny himself, had tea with Countess America Bernstorff, daughter of the commander of the Brunswick Germans in the Revolution, attended plays, ballets, and balls. He learned to dance in the continental manner, apologetically explaining to Norton that he wished to "wear off all awkwardness and uncouthness," and learned French and Italian, the languages of the salon. Most of all he enjoyed the quiet evenings at Schleiermacher's home and the *Gemütlichkeit* of German homelife — a Christmas tree, the first he had ever seen, the quaint German New Year's Eve, the family feeling that he missed during the holiday season at Göttingen. Life in Berlin was pleasant, so pleasant that the young man nearly forgot his purpose, and at the opening of his third year abroad he firmly wrote in his journal a set of New Year's resolutions. "1. To rise earlier than I have formerly done. 2 I must exert myself to obtain a good English style 3. I must strive to use the French language with propriety and ease. 4. Italian must be learnt thoroughly."

As the month of January, 1821, drew to a close, he received news that Harvard had voted to add a thousand dollars to his scholarship, that he might spend a year on the continent in France and Italy

before returning to Massachusetts. He was grateful for the gift and the opportunity it afforded him, yet he was reluctant to leave the gay and learned Prussian city. He loved Berlin, though the perfect fusion of intellect and spirit for which he searched had eluded him, and with the sentimentality of the adolescent romantic he wrote in his journal:

> I do not find at Berlin my ideal of humanity. I find no one who answers to my young notions of mental greatness I shall find such no where — earth does not bear such; vain is the search after perfection, vain is the hope of ever seeing our early views and expectations realized.

He left Berlin with reluctance, and the last man to clasp his hand was Schleiermacher. "I think with more affection of my five months in Berlin than of the two years I spent at Gottingen," he wrote Kirkland.

Bancroft was on his way to Paris early in February, a leisurely journey, with frequent stopovers at the homes of German scholars to whom his record and his letters of introduction provided an easy passport At Leipzig he talked with Spohn once more, and from Kosen he sent home to Levi Hedge a report on young Frederick Hedge, then enrolled at the famous Schulpforta gymnasium. Frederick was a problem. Dismissed from his first school at Gottingen, and next from Ilfeld in the Harz mountains for what Bancroft called "impertinence and *unbeschreibliche Faulheit,*" he seemed to have found some stability at this, his third school. Schulpforta interested Bancroft, for he had not forgotten his idea of becoming a schoolmaster, and he stayed at the institution for several days, chatting with the teachers and observing the classroom methods He wrote an elaborate account of the two-hundred-year-old institution to Levi Hedge, describing it in great detail The discipline was strict but just, and the association between master and student a close and personal one, as it should be. Its curriculum staggered Bancroft; the sixteen-year-old boys studied philosophy, music, mathematics, logic, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, Italian, dancing, history, geography, religion, and aesthetics

At Weissenfels he paused to visit Max Muller, author of *Die Schuld*, and to discuss with him the latest developments in educational theory before he pushed on to Weimar, where he stopped to visit Goethe for the second time. The aged poet, in the twilight

of his career, seemed to take little interest in the affairs of the world, and Bancroft could not get him to talk. Mention of Tieck brought no response from Goethe, and he merely observed of the Schlegels that "they have written many pretty things" Byron's *Don Juan* called up a spark of enthusiasm in the old man. The English language, he observed, lent itself to comic literature more readily than any other, and in Byron it had found its master in verse-satire. America still interested him, and he inquired after Cogswell and the rest of the *neuen Amerikaner*. Bancroft shifted the conversation to Goethe's own work. He was living in seclusion, the poet said, associating with few at Weimar, appearing but rarely at the Duke's court, and dictating several hours daily on his *Morphologie* and *Wilhelm Meister, Wander-Jahren,* a volume of which had recently been completed The conversation went on as Goethe talked of the Schlegels' translation of Shakespeare, Humboldt's *Agamemnon*, the riches of art in Berlin, and Bancroft noted the difference between the poet and the German university professors, the liveliness and ease of the gentleman in contrast to the stuffiness and formality of the scholar. After a short half hour Bancroft left, to return for another and shorter visit two days later before quitting Weimar.

From Goethe's home the young American proceeded to Frankfurt, to Darmstadt, and thence to Heidelberg, where he stayed for a month at the university, listening to the lectures of Schlosser, the historian His didactic approach to history and his vast store of knowledge impressed the young man, but he gained little from Schlosser and proceeded to Paris without further pause On May 5 he arrived in the French capital, bitterly disappointed at finding no letters there from America advising him as to his future. He needed advice badly, for he was still unsettled as to his choice of a profession — should he become theologian, teacher, or preacher? "May I urge you to favor me with a few lines?" he asked Kirkland the day following his arrival. "They would serve to govern me in making my resolutions; and would relieve me from the state of uncertainty as to your wishes I am now in." That same day he met August Wilhelm Schlegel, on the verge of departure for Bonn with a collection of Sanscrit treasures, and dined with Washington Irving, the patriarch of American letters, then living in Paris. If Berlin had been exciting, Paris was brilliant, and the three months that followed found the Harvard theological student in the midst

of the most glittering galaxy adorning any European society.

In early May, Alexander von Humboldt took him to a session of the Institut de France, where he heard the naturalist Cuvier and the astronomer D'Alembert engage in argument Not long afterwards Benjamin Constant invited him to dinner, and as he entered the room General Lafayette welcomed him warmly. Von Humboldt sat beside him at dinner, Dr. Gall the craniologist conversed with him in the drawing-room, and the Italian patriot General Sebastini shook his hand. For a boy of twenty-one it was a dazzling evening in the company of the great. He wrote in his journal before retiring, "At that little table how many men who hold a conspicuous place in the political and literary world! I never was at so pleasant a dinner party!" A few days later he called on Lafayette, chatting for an hour and more with the old hero in his parlour, hung with engravings of Washington, the Constitution of the United States, and the "Rights of Man" decree of the Assemblée Constituante. In June, Irving called to propose an excursion to Albert Gallatin's villa at Verrières, and on the twentieth they rode in a carriage out the Orléans highway through the neat French countryside, stopping to walk through the fields and woods to the American minister's home When they tired, they threw themselves on the grass and rested, while Irving talked. "Learn all you can in your youth," Irving told him; "buy books, read, listen — . . . follow learning, scramble to it, get it wherever and whenever you can" Gallatin, when they arrived, was entertaining the Baron de Stael, son of the authoress of *De l'Allemagne,* and the four men walked up the hill behind the house to view the landscape before dinner, a gay and witty meal, full of fine talk and gracious humour. Then at seven Irving and his young friend walked back through the woods to Paris

Through Irving, who took a fancy to the earnest, handsome New England boy, Bancroft gained entrance to the most brilliant social circles of Paris He met Thomas Moore, Lord and Lady Holland, and Sir John Russell He celebrated the Fourth of July with Lafayette, walked in the evenings with Irving, or sat in Irving's rooms in the Rue du Mont-Tabor listening to the author read aloud from his manuscripts — *Saint Mark's Eve,* or another of the graceful, imaginative stories he was writing at the time. But the loneliness and uncertainty of the boy showed itself, even in the midst of the magnificence of Paris, in his letters to America. "Some-

times when weeks or months have passed," he wrote Norton, "and no line from home has come to gladden me, I look within myself and live within myself. . . Say what you will, write to me as often as you will or can, but do not forget nor cease to regard with friendly feelings your true and affectionate friend."

In August, Bancroft received word that Samuel Eliot of Harvard, visiting in London, wished to see him in order to inform President Kirkland of his progress Bancroft made the crossing from Calais to Dover on about the tenth of the month, and spent some two weeks in the British capital; unfortunately, in London he had no acquaintances to open doors to him as he had in Berlin and Paris, and he found the city foggy, dull, and unexciting Workmen were removing the scaffolding from Westminster Abbey, erected for the recent coronation of George IV, and he could not gain admittance. He attended one of the sermons of Belsham, the great apostle of Unitarianism in England, thinking to gain some inspiration, but he found the preaching dull and monotonous He found none of the cordiality with which Paris had greeted him, and he wrote disgustedly in his journal, "London is no place to live in!" Except for a dinner engagement with a traveling professor from the University of Kentucky he found little to make his stay enjoyable, and wrote in his journal on August 28th. "I am glad to be back in Paris again"

He made his farewell to Paris soon after his return, however, and in the first week of September, 1821, was on his way to Geneva on the first leg of a walking trip that six weeks later ended in Rome. Irving said goodbye to him sadly, and Lafayette, enlisting him in the cause of Italian liberty, asked him to carry with him copies of speeches to be published secretly in and disseminated through Italy. Alexander von Humboldt wrote him a letter of introduction to the scholar Pictet in Geneva, and gave him much good advice.

For six weeks the youth was alone, walking through the Alps and the quaint Swiss and Italian villages, watching the peasants crush grapes in their presses and wash themselves in the purple-stained streams, rising at dawn to see the sun break over the mountains. Occasionally he fell in with other travelers, but for the most part he walked alone, fighting out with himself the choice of his life work, and filling his journal each night with long discussions of the problem of his future. On October 13 he wrote: "It seemed to me this morning that my disposition fits me for a clergyman, and

that I never should be happy, as if God should teach me one day to pray earnestly and preach eloquently." Then black moods of depression might come, almost as frequently as the periods of certainty and exaltation. "I would rather you would think me happy than tell you what cause I have to be sorrowful," he wrote Norton. "If I could always possess the calm serenity of spirit which I have sometimes felt!" The rain pelted him and the sun burned him and he was seized with sudden fits of irrepressible delight, shouting out the chorus of a song as he went along the mountain roads, dancing and leaping like a madman when the spirit moved him He passed through Savoy, up the valley of the Chamouny, by the glaciers and Mont Blanc, saw the headwaters of the icy Rhone and the sun glancing from the crest of the Jungfrau, and as he walked farther the moods of depression became fewer and less violent. "When I entered Switzerland," he told Norton, "I came with a heavy and desponding heart. But I have reposed on the bosom of nature, and have there grown young again."

By the time Bancroft reached Milan on October 22 he had not yet made up his mind whether to be a minister or a teacher He had evidently been turning the matter of founding a school over in his mind for some weeks, and in his journal, dated October 27, he wrote down a plan, a composite of what he had seen in Berlin and at the Schulpforta, and of what he had learned from Schleiermacher and Pestalozzi:

OF SCHOOLS

easy to procure or to make the necessary works for that. A translation of French's small grammar; and of Jacob's handbook would be sufficient for a commencement 2 Natural history should be taught, it quickens all the powers and creates the faculty of accurate observation . 3. Emulation of excellence in virtue. No one ought to be awarded at the expense of another, and even where there is nothing but prizes, they who fail of gaining them, may have been impeded by the nature of their talents and not by their own want of exertion 4 Corporal punishments must be abolished as degrading the individual who receives them, and as encouraging the base passions of fear and deception 5 Classes must be formed according to the characters and capacities of each individual boy. 6 Country schoolmasters might be formed with little expense by

annexing to the school an institution for orphans, to be educated for schoolmasters Of these the best might be chosen for a learned discipline and be fitted for taking care of academies. 7. Eventually a vast printing establishment might be annexed to the school.

Such a school was unknown in America. It was to be a long time before the plan was put into operation, and then but imperfectly.

He stayed in Milan for nearly a week, dining with Alexander Manzoni, the Italian revolutionary, reading Italian history late each night and rising at dawn so that he could absorb all the better all that Italy had to give him. Leonardo's *Last Supper*, the greatest gift Milan could offer, left him nearly speechless, but he recovered sufficiently to note piously in his diary that evening that "the door cut thro' the legs of the Savior cannot be viewed without horror." From Milan he went to Brescia and to Venice, and thence to Florence, packing his waking hours with sightseeing. "When I think," he wrote, "of the time when I ran about Worcester as a boy, that knew nothing of Europe but what little might be learned from books . . . . I cannot but wonder at my own happy destiny." By November 25 he was in Rome, whose churches, galleries, and collections kept him, he said, "silent with admiration." He entered St. Peter's at daylight, threw himself on his knees before the great altar, and thanked God for his preservation from evil and for his great good fortune. He climbed the Apennines to view the Adriatic and the Tuscan sea, trod with reverence in Milton's steps at Vallombrosa, and filled the pages of his journal with long and bubbling entries treating of the wonders he had seen and with the youthfully sentimental verses they inspired. His letters of introduction took him into the brilliant circles of Roman society as they had into the Parisian. Princess Borghese, sister of Napoleon; Chevalier Bunsen; the German savant Niebuhr; Mrs. Patterson, former wife of Jerome Bonaparte, and others extended cordiality to the young American. The first day of the new year of 1822, however, he spent meditating, on his home, his parents, his benefactors, and p[illegible] on his future. He wrote in his diary:

I b[illegible] a strong de[illegible]g in the ministry, of serving at the [illegible] I [illegible]gly rest my hope of distinction on [illegible] in preaching the doctrines of C[illegible] author of the universe, of Christ [illegible], of the nature and possi-

bility of virtue, of the duty of becoming like God, of life, death, and immortality.

Thus on New Year's day, 1822, he reached a decision.

It is clear from the journals that with his decision to enter the ministry a great weight was lifted from Bancroft's mind, for the daily entries which follow show a lighter mood. In the middle of February he set out for Naples, and after a month in the most festive of Italian cities he spent a few days exploring the archaeological and architectural remains at Paestum With three young Italian friends he set out in a sailboat to see the coastline of the gulf at Salerno, landing at Amalfi and spending two nights in a verminous jail because of his inability to show the proper passports. He helped pass the time until the order of release arrived from the Neapolitan police by writing a mock "Prisoner's Lament," after the manner of Byron. Back in Rome he found letters awaiting him from home — he was expected to return in June, his period of study over, and he set out on a leisurely journey northward to Marseilles, where he might catch the American packet a month hence.

The trip from Rome to Marseilles was the most enjoyable of his Italian tour. At Leghorn he paused for a few days to take advantage of the incomparable climate, and in sheer exuberance he rowed far out into the blue Mediterranean, leaped overboard, and swam two miles back to land. A few weeks later, not far away near Spezzia, the body of Shelley washed up on the shore. At Montenero, near Leghorn, Lord Byron lived with the Countess Guiccioli in an informal relationship that had half Europe talking, and Bancroft resolved to meet the British poet The United States frigate *Constitution* lay off Leghorn in the bay, and on May 21, as Bancroft was at tea with a group of Americans as a guest of Captain Chauncy, Byron came aboard Only thirty-four, the poet looked more than forty, aging, sallow, fat, greying patches in his reddish hair, but with an air of elegance that made him seem still attractive and debonair. Bancroft noted that the poet, when he saw that the group included women, turned sharply as if to leave. (He explained later that he feared they were English ladies, toward whom, at the time, he was less than friendly.) Captain Chauncy received his guest with naval civility, and as the ladies were introduced to the handsome poet, a salute of several guns split the air and the American

flag broke out in the breeze. Bancroft found little opportunity to talk with Byron, who spent most of his time receiving homage from the feminine guests. As the poet made ready to leave, one of the ladies requested, with many blushes, the rose he wore in his lapel. Byron laughed, tossed the flower to her, and stepped from the ship, a magnificent exit.

Still desiring to talk with the author of *Don Juan*, which was then appearing in instalments and sweeping the continent in furious popularity, Bancroft rode the next day to Montenero and wrote a short note to him, requesting an audience. Shortly a servant returned. "Could you make it convenient about an hour hence? — for I have been lazy today and am not yet drest — and (I am ashamed to say) hardly awake — Noel Byron" The young American plucked myrtle and looked at the sea from the piazza of Byron's home, and in an hour was ushered into a large cool room to meet the poet, who limped forward with outstretched hand. At first Byron would talk of nothing but America, but Bancroft steered the conversation to literature. He had known Irving in Paris, he told Byron, and Irving had spoken highly of him. Irving, of course — Byron knew and enjoyed his stories, although he thought his style "rather florid." Bancroft mentioned his visits to Goethe, and the German's praise of his work. Byron was frankly flattered The praise of Goethe would help sustain him, he said, in the face of the abuse he had received from London. As for Goethe's comparison of *Manfred* with *Faust*, he deemed it an honor to have his work mentioned in the same breath with *Faust;* however, he knew *Faust* only through the portions of it which Monk Lewis had translated to him. Shelley was busy translating *Faust* at this very moment. "You may have heard foolish stories of Shelley," he continued, "of his being a man of no principles, an atheist, and all that, but he is not. Shelley is more Christian than the lot of them."

Mention of Shelley led Byron into a recital of his own difficulties with public opinion. The King himself was determined to persecute him, and the priests of Italy were unanimous against him. People advised him to discontinue *Don Juan*. "People call it immoral," he complained, "and put *Roderick Random* in their libraries!" From a desk he picked up a book (the latest published cantos of *Don Juan*) dashed off "From Noel Byron" in a flowing hand, and thrust it into Bancroft's hands. The talk turned from

poetry to the beauties of Italian scenery, and when Byron took the young man into the next room to point out Elba, dimly visible in the distance, a young woman, seated on the sofa, looked up from a book. Byron introduced Bancroft, and the Massachusetts boy stood face to face with the woman whose name was whispered in a hundred salons and boudoirs, the Countess Guiccioli — married to a wealthy nobleman at sixteen, mistress of Byron at eighteen, her marriage dissolved by papal decree, her love for the British poet the greatest influence in his life for three years Bancroft thought her beautiful, though many of Byron's friends called her dull and dumpy. Her beauty was of a delicate type, the young man wrote — "a lovely expression, a sweet mouth, a beautifully small waist, her face and manner all innocence and repose" He found it difficult to believe the stories he had heard. The conversation now proceeded in Italian, of music, of Berlin, of *Lalla Rookh*, "in short," reported Bancroft to his sister, "of the things which are proper to be discussed in the company of a *very* pretty woman." With the approach of the noon hour Bancroft made ready to leave, but Byron, stepping to a door, threw it open to reveal a fully-set luncheon table in the next room. So the three lunched and talked on The pleasant conversation seemed all too short, and as Bancroft left he thought Byron said goodbye somewhat sadly. He wished to go to America, he said. He could go unprejudiced, at least with no love for his mother country to blind him to its excellences, and perhaps there he might find the honor Britain failed to give him. Two years later he was dead in Greece.

From Leghorn Bancroft proceeded northward to Genoa on horseback, with a packmule to carry his belongings, along the Riviera to Marseilles June 12 found him aboard the American ship *Belle*, bound for New York and home The European pilgrimage was done, and the strenuous business of making his way in life faced him squarely. "The days of tranquil, uninterrupted study are over," he wrote. "Those days are gone by; my wishes prompt me — my situation forces me — to action. I must resolve on my future pursuits and course of life immediately."

Unfortunately for Bancroft, he found disappointment waiting for him in Massachusetts He had been abroad nearly three years, living in the society of European sophisticates and scholars, absorbing continental manners, moving in an atmosphere of moral freedom, and, as New England thought, an atmosphere of dan-

gerous laxity in morals and manners. In Europe he had been fêted and no doubt flattered as a precocious representative of a nation then unfamiliar to the salons of Paris, Berlin, and Rome. At home he was merely the son of Aaron Bancroft of Worcester, subject to judgment by the standards of a highly critical and conservative community, one not far removed from the austerity of the Puritan colonists. Boston, no matter how cosmopolitan it might believe itself to be, was not Paris, and it was bound to be difficult for a boy of twenty-two who had talked as an equal with Irving and Lafayette, discussed music with Napoleon's sister, and lunched with Byron and his mistress, to return immediately to the ways of Massachusetts

Andrews Norton, some months before, had perceived a note of change creeping into his protégé's letters "Our state of society," Norton warned gently, "is such as to require an extraordinary degree of attention to manners, in order that one may be respectable and useful. . . . There is no place, I believe, where anything implying a considerable defect in character, anything like ostentation or vanity, anything *outrè* or *bizarre* (if I may use two French words at once) is observed with a keener perception of ridicule, or tends more to the disadvantage of him in whom it is observed." When, on August 8, Norton met Bancroft in Cambridge, he could hardly believe his eyes. This popinjay, in velveteen trousers, with a silken beard, lisping Italian phrases, could hardly be the serious, sober youth who left Harvard to study theology abroad! When Bancroft greeted him effusively, clasping him in embrace and kissing him on both cheeks in the best continental manner, Norton turned away in disappointment and disgust.

A few weeks later he received a note from Norton ("a most unprovoked attack upon my feelings and character") which suggested that it would be desirable if the young man no longer called at Shady Hill, and it was six years before the two spoke again. The loss of Norton's friendship meant much to Bancroft, for Norton had been his closest friend and guide. It was particularly galling for the young man to remember that Norton had been instrumental in obtaining funds for his scholarship to Gottingen, and he wrote: "It is my misery to have lived on charity, while abroad, and Mr. Norton was one of those whose bread I ate — bitter enough is the taste of it in my belly." The rest of Cambridge tended to agree with Norton, except Edward Everett, who

understood the circumstances. There had been great hopes for George Bancroft, hopes of a brilliant future at Harvard and in the clergy, and few of those who knew him saw beneath the uneasily worn affectations the earnest, rather humble boy who wanted more than anything else to justify their expectations

CHAPTER THREE

The Schoolmaster and the Critic
1823–1831

THE YOUNG man knew that the unpropitious beginning might do him lasting harm, and with a critical self-honesty rare in one of his years, he set about rectifying the effects of his first ill-timed indiscretions. "I have grown quite estranged from my own country and countrymen," he admitted to Samuel Eliot. "Now that I am at home my first labour must be to make myself acquainted with the state of feeling about me. . . These little difficulties should pass soon, and before winter I expect to find all the superfluous excitability, which I gathered in the Southern countries, chilled to a calmness fit for our colder latitudes"

He had been trained for the ministry, but entrance into the clergy was a slow process, not to be completed in the space of a few short months In the meantime, as he looked for a church, a Harvard tutorship in Greek offered itself for the academic year 1822–33, an opportunity to put his learning to good use as he gained experience and seasoning as a preacher, and an opportunity to introduce to Harvard some of the salient points of the German system of education which had attracted him at Berlin, Gottingen, and Schulpforta. While not wholly satisfactory to him as a means of displaying his education to the best advantage, the tutorship still offered him a chance to support himself, and he accepted it immediately. "I do not expect to be a popular tutor," he said, "for I expect to require more work than has been usual."

His predictions were unfortunately soon realized, for his classroom mannerisms, his insistence upon complete factual knowledge, his undiplomatic attitude, and his fondness for the German system smacked too much of arrogance and affectation for the Harvard undergraduates, who took an instant dislike to him. Bancroft at

the outset formed his classes in beginning Greek on the basis of ability; the best students were placed in one section, the average students together in another, and the poor students trailed in a third class. The brilliant students found that they were required to do more work than their classmates, and protested; the poor students disliked being labelled as such in the eyes of the college. Bancroft, fresh from the classes of Dissen and Eichhorn, demanded amounts of work unheard of in Cambridge. The methods of instruction at Harvard did not provide the student with the proper foundations, Bancroft believed, or with the knowledge of detail that might be gained only through laborious study and stern self-discipline — in other words, Harvard methods were neither inspiring, rigorous, nor thorough. Library facilities were inadequate; the recitation system then in practice was outworn, he thought, and the German lecture method ought to be substituted. In a word, Bancroft felt that Harvard was outmoded, and he intended to see that in the teaching of beginning Greek some of the shortcomings, at least, were remedied

It was not many weeks before the Greek classes came near to open rebellion. At night groups of students gathered under his [illegible] dandified walk, [illegible] n, "Thus we do [illegible] ases One of his students expressed the attitude of the Harvard undergraduate by saying· "His manners, style of writing, theology, etc., were bad, and as a tutor he was only the laughing butt of the college." Yet the boys learned Greek as never before It was soon evident that the slowest students in Bancroft's classes were proceeding faster than had any previous class, regardless of brilliance, in Harvard history, and his advanced section had to be held back for fear of covering the whole of the second year's work in the first year No one could doubt the young man's efficiency as a teacher, although the administration looked upon his methods with skepticism They seemed too Germanized, perhaps too intensive, for Harvard, and Bancroft, in the midst of his enthusiasm for change, found himself confronted by the stone-wall of Harvard complacency. Except for Ticknor, Everett, and Cogswell, no one, he felt, appreciated his efforts toward educational reform and progress He wrote bitterly to Samuel Eliot, after a term of teaching: "I have the satisfaction of knowing that I have carried my points alone, unassisted

by any cooperation whatever from any one individual in Cambridge, and supported by no man in any design except Mr. Ticknor." The impossibility of reconciling the methods of Göttingen with the spirit of Cambridge was all too apparent, and the young man, less than four months after the beginning of his first year of teaching, turned his thoughts again to the idea of a new secondary school, patterned upon those European principles which Harvard seemed unlikely to tolerate or approve. It was the same plan that he had weighed in his mind while on his tour of Italy, and in December he confided to Samuel Eliot that he had made his decision.

I have considered the nature of high schools, grammar schools, gymnasia, classical schools, and the like. I have consulted the books which treat of education I have reflected on the *means* and *end* of education Now I am going to turn *schoolmaster.*

The decision thus confided was the fruit of long conversations with Joseph Cogswell, librarian of the college and as weary as Bancroft of the stubborn opposition from Kirkland and the Corporation to new ideas. Cogswell, like Bancroft a product of Germany and a devout believer in the efficiency of German methods, had tried in his own way to introduce reforms into the college with as little success as his younger companion. The thought of a new school, where they might experiment to their hearts' content without a hostile administration with which to contend, struck both as a marvellously attractive plan. Both had seen the schools of Europe and had admired them Both felt that the secondary schools of America were far behind those of Pestalozzi, Fellenberg, and the rest, and that it was a patriotic duty to bring the best of European educational thought to their native shores. Accordingly throughout the winter of the school year 1822–23 they planned to search out both finances and a suitable site for their revolutionary project in experimental educational methods, one of the most important experiments, it turned out, in the nineteenth century.

The impatience of the two young men with Harvard can be ascribed neither to their inability to adjust themselves to the college after their experiences abroad nor to Harvard's inability to face criticism from its faculty. The Harvard to which Bancroft and Cogswell returned was a college in the process of change, roused slowly from a lethargic sleep by the recently returned European

pilgrims, Ticknor and Everett, and it looked back Janus-like to the static eighteenth century as well as forward to the dynamic nineteenth. It was too old to be changed overnight to a German or any other pattern. President Kirkland, while a progressive and liberal schoolman, wished to move slowly, sifting the good from the harmful, adapting to Harvard's uses only that which it needed and might readily assimilate Ticknor, in complete sympathy with the aims of the disgruntled Cogswell and Bancroft, proceeded more diplomatically than the two younger men, working through established channels, and in the end he succeeded in instituting more than one of their desired reforms Later, with Ware, Norton, and others, he managed to enter an opening wedge, beginning a series of gradual changes which led ultimately to a more complete reform. But Cogswell and Bancroft, precipitate, impatient, and filled with the zeal of converts, could not wait and so struck out for themselves.

Bancroft had not forgotten his pledge to enter the ministry, despite his increasing interest in educational problems, but at times his courage nearly failed him "I should never wish to become a clergyman in Boston," he once wrote his father. "I dread it; dangerous climate, which is most dangerous for those who are obliged to speak in public, unprotected against its destroying might." The churches of Boston and Cambridge were always open to the son of Aaron Bancroft, and he took advantage of the opportunity to present himself to the New England congregations nearly every Sunday for eleven months. "I now consider myself as engaged in the good work," he told Eliot in September of 1822, "and mean soon to declare myself a candidate . . In preaching I shall endeavor to be earnest and impressive rather than oratorical, and hope to write sermons that are serious and evangelical rather than fashionable."

He spoke at Bolton, at Portsmouth, in Boston, and in numerous pulpits near Cambridge, writing his sermons out and revising them carefully. They were impressive sermons — Emerson called him "a rising star on our horizon" — but the sober divines of New England raised an eyebrow at their phrases and their implications. When the earnest young man spoke of "our dear pelican Christ" they agreed that the bit of imagery was far too continental and pagan for Massachusetts ears. His sermons were simply unedifying, said the Reverend Andrews Peabody. They were oratorical and obscure, conscious displays of learning, said others Emerson, in

his charitable way, thought him "an infant Hercules," but admitted that he needed "a great deal of cutting and pruning." In short, Bancroft's prospects for a clerical career were disappointing, and few tears were shed when he decided, in the spring of 1823, to concentrate his talents upon teaching. Emerson wrote the young man's ministerial epitaph into his journal not long afterwards: "He hath sadly disappointed great expectations, and for the present hath done preaching."

As his preaching career began inauspiciously and ended unsuccessfully in the year 1823, so did Bancroft's brief excursion into literature. Inspired by his experiences abroad, he had inscribed in his journals throughout the winter and spring of 1821 and 1822 occasional poems dealing with Europe, his thoughts of home, and his impressions of European nature and art. Part of the fall of 1823 at Harvard was spent in reworking and revising the verses, and in October he published them in a slim little volume of some seventy pages, dedicated to President Kirkland. The reaction of the public was not encouraging, since the volume had little to commend it except the author's earnest and naive feelings expressed in sincere but halting meters. As an index to Bancroft's youthful mind the poems were interesting; as literature they were much less so. They traced the young man's journey abroad, his impressions of Europe, and his return home — a romantic account, bursting with superlatives, of a sentimental journey through the same countries through which Longfellow travelled ten years later with much the same results in *Outre-Mer*. A preface described the author's departure from America, while

> . . . fast away the tear he brushed,
> That down his cheek too freely gushed,
> As swiftly from his native shore,
> The vessel hurrying breezes bore

Debarkation in Europe, and the sights of strange new lands and people, afforded opportunity for several pieces on German scenery, on Switzerland, Italy, and France, and a long poem on Rome closed the book as

> The weary pilgrim to his home returns,
> For Freedom's air, for western climes he burns;
> Where dwell the brave, the generous, the free,
> O! There is Rome; — no other Rome for me.

The temper of the collection was too sentimental for Massachusetts, while the readiness of the author to burst into tears at the slightest emotional stimulus, his dogged adherence to regularity of rhythm, and his obvious debt to Byron's *Childe Harold* marked his Muse as of a lesser flight Though the poems were characterized by "a rare facility of expression," as their sole reviewer remarked in *The Christian Disciple and Theological Review,* and by "a classical and refined taste," they were hardly productions of literary genius. *Chamouny,* a poem of the mountains, provides an example·

> Where the monarch of the hills rears his head to the skies,
> And around him his ministers emulous rise,
>
> . . . .
>
> And there in the bosom of earth is my course;
> Through the workshop of nature unhindered I flow,
> Mid her crystals of rock, and her crystals of snow.
> 'Tis there I have founded my castle's bright halls
> Its roof is of ice, and of ice its blue walls;
> With crystals and agates inlaid are my floors,
> The Lauwine hath lent me his sheets for my doors
> Though my roof melts away in the sun's summer blaze,
> On the halls of my palace shall man never gaze,
> For I call on the mountains to hide where I dwell,
> And the avalanche tumbles and covers me well.

Bancroft himself soon admitted that he lacked the great poet's sweep, and that the public neglect of his adolescent effusions was no doubt deserved He told Kirkland somewhat ruefully that his volume "was not much cared for . . . I have rather the patience of mind, required for the pursuits of learning and efforts in prose than the bold invention which gives life to original poetry" In later years, when the volumes of his *History* had proved the correctness of his self-criticism, he spent a great deal of time and money in procuring and destroying all the copies of the *Poems* he could find, preferring to be judged by posterity as a historian and critic alone.

He was triply a failure—at Harvard, in the pulpit, and as a poet—and he admitted as much in the spring of 1823, telling Samuel Eliot:

Not one spring of comfort have I had yet to draw from My state has been nothing but trouble, trouble, trouble, and I am heartily glad that the end of the year is coming soon I have been preaching, might perhaps if I would, be advantageously placed. But I think it better to wage the warfare of learning than of faith, for the plain reason that I hold myself better fitted for the first, than the last. . . . I have a proud consciousness of having done my duty — but these eight months have been such, as I would not wish an enemy to be curst with.

His last hope for success lay in the new school.

Bancroft could scarcely have chosen a more suitable partner for his venture than Joseph Green Cogswell. Joining Ticknor and Everett at Göttingen to become one of the *neuen Amerikaner* of whom all Germany spoke with respect, he returned in 1820 to become librarian of Harvard and Professor of Mineralogy and Geology He was fourteen years older than Bancroft, and his even temperament and mature judgment helped counteract the twenty-three-year-old Bancroft's erratic and excitable nature. Kirkland was genuinely sorry to lose the two men. Ticknor felt that while their discontent might be justified, time and patience might remove its causes, and Emerson, perceiving that the new educational venture meant Bancroft's final farewell to the ministry, wrote: "I mourn — because good schoolmasters are as plenty as whortleberries but good ministers are not — and Bancroft might be one of the best" Nathan Parker, the old friend of the Exeter days, advised strongly against the venture, feeling that in New England "the public sentiment is not as yet sufficiently enlightened to admit of the ready execution of your plan." Samuel Eliot was shocked at the news.

What is this wild scheme of yours and Cogswell's of going into the woods to give instruction in the classics? The place for you to give instruction in the classics is Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts!

At first the two men were undecided, since many boys from the Southern states came north to study, as to whether or not they might most profitably locate near Baltimore, but Jared Sparks wrote that there were no openings for schools in the upper South. It was clear to both men, after some discussion, that their greatest chance of success lay in education-conscious Massachusetts. In June, their duties at Harvard completed, Cogswell and Bancroft set out to find a suitable site for their school. Near Northampton they

found what seemed to be the answer, two stone houses at a reasonable rent, built on a small rolling eminence known locally as Round Hill. Originally built by the three brothers Shepard, descendants of the famous old New England divine, the houses with about fifty acres of land had gradually passed to the ownership of one brother who was willing to rent or sell. The location was ideal, near enough to the town to allow commerce with Northampton, far enough away to insure privacy. There was a magnificent view of Monadnock, of the blue hills in the distance, and of the Connecticut river beyond, making a huge ox-bow bend Bancroft was struck immediately by the natural beauties of the place. "Were I always to have a meadow like this of Northampton before me, and such *peaceful* mountains, I should forget that Aetna has its volcanoes, and Syria its sands!" The schoolmasters agreed on the site, engaged the property for a year beginning in September, and returned to Cambridge to begin their work.

Their first task, naturally, was to secure students for the project, which they decided to name Round Hill School, and their method of attracting attention took the form of a printed prospectus, published in Cambridge during the early summer of 1823, enumerating the conditions and objectives of the school "The institution which we propose to establish," the two wrote,

> [illegible]
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> and to delay them longer would be to waste precious time, and (what is of still more moment) the period when good habits are most easily formed

The prospectus proceeded to explain the conditions under which boys were to be admitted — only boys of nine to twelve years were desired, preferably not as day students, and it was implied that pupils from other schools were not welcome, presumably since Round Hill's methods were to be revolutionary. A restricted number, between ten and twenty, were to be chosen, the total cost apiece to amount to $300 for the year. Studies, it was promised, were to be of a "liberal nature," but the two masters made it clear that they wished to give "a practical character to our institution, and educate not for an ideal world, but for the world as it is," a concession to hard-headed Yankee parents. The school term was

to last the full year, with two vacations of three weeks each at the winter and summer solstices. Methods of government within the school were to be of the "parental" type, with persuasion and kindness substituted for corporal punishment Industry and obedience would be encouraged, and the spirit of emulation sedulously avoided as a motivation for study. English, the ancient languages, four modern languages, history, geography, and mathematics made up the tentative curriculum for the opening term; reading and composition were to be included as part of the program; and sports and gymnastics coordinated with the other studies after the practice of the German, Jahn, whose work both men had observed abroad. A good library for the use of the boys was promised, for "whenever good books are brought together, they will find readers," and all students must be prepared to learn Latin, the "language essential to a practical education." Pocket-money, parents were warned, must not be provided for the boys, lest some have more than others and economic democracy destroyed. Clothes, said Bancroft and Cogswell, were "to be regulated with reference to neatness, economy, and cleanliness"; that is, a uniform was to be adopted after the fashion of the German schools:

> Coat or roundabout of blue grey broad cloth, with bright buttons, waistcoat of light blue kerseymere, for winter Blue broadcloth is allowed instead of blue grey. Blue nankin or cotton suit complete, for summer, and for holidays, blue silk or bombazine coat or roundabout, white jacket, and trowsers. . . . A plain blue cloth cap in winter, or a straw hat in summer, is allowed instead of a hat.

The school opened its doors on the first of October, 1823, to fifteen boarders and ten day students. One instructor, N. M. Hentz, a young man who held a degree from the University of Paris, was hired to teach French, otherwise the entire teaching load was distributed between Cogswell and Bancroft. Cogswell almost at once took over the major administrative duties, leaving the younger man most of the classes in Greek, Latin, logic, history, and German Despite the long hours of teaching, Bancroft was pleased with his work, writing to Everett a few weeks after the opening of the school: "We are going on very easily and very happily. . . . At Northampton we are left entirely to ourselves, and there is some comfort in shaping one's own conduct by one's own inclinations and views, without being obliged to bend to the ignorance

of others." Flattering notices appeared in the newspapers as the school caught attention. The aged Thomas Jefferson, himself a pioneer educator and the founder of a great university, commented sagely from Monticello. "This will certainly prove a great blessing to the individuals who can obtain access to it. The only ground of regret is the small extent of its scale, in the few who can have its advantages it will lay a solid foundation of virtue as well as of learning."

There were a good many reasons why Round Hill might attract favorable attention, for from the first both masters incorporated in their system of teaching some striking innovations in secondary school procedure, some of them original, others adaptations of the newest European practices The daily schedule was far more difficult than that of the usual American boarding school. At six in the morning the boys rose and dressed in time for short devotional exercises at six-thirty. Six forty-five found them in their rooms for study and recitation until seven-fifty, when they trooped outside for calisthenics beneath a spreading oak tree. They took a mile run through the woods after their exercises; Bancroft always ran with the boys, usually doing the mile in slightly less than six minutes. A breakfast of bread and butter, baked apples, and milk or coffee came at eight, [illegible]
playfield for a [illegible]
games. From ni[illegible]
meat and vegetables, rice, and pudding or pie At one in the afternoon came another half-hour of exercise, and then classes from two until five. Sports took the half-hour following, and the evening meal from five-thirty to six From six-thirty until eight they wrote French exercises, and at eight-fifteen, after a short devotional meeting, they went to bed. "From morning until night there is not a moment which has not its business," said Bancroft proudly. Neither the schedule nor the studies were easy, but the two masters knew there was no shortcut to an education "The great object with us," Bancroft told his sister, "is to teach the actual application of the mind, and I think it is no object to make a play or an amusement of what should be hard work. Nor is it essential to make them find it more attractive than play, it is a lesson which men cannot learn too soon, that they are born to work, and not to while away life in pastime." The Round Hill boys learned the lesson daily.

Yet life at Round Hill was pleasant and diverting compared to the weary routine of parsing and declining which characterized the methods of most similar contemporary institutions. Cogswell, from the first much more of a companion to the boys than Bancroft, accompanied them on long walking trips, which at times reached heroic proportions — one such trip covered forty-two miles in thirty-two hours, a cart carrying biscuits, lemons, and claret following the group to provide refreshment. In later years, Cogswell organized wagon trips for the students to places of interest nearby, sometimes allowing as long as four days for the journey. Using two huge carryalls, capable of holding thirty boys apiece and nicknamed "the Nutshells," they visited Prescott at Pepperell, old John Adams at Nahant, and other dignitaries within reasonable distance. Bancroft built a running track, a half-mile in length, and required the students to circle it in not more than three and a half minutes. The back slope of the school's fifty acres the two masters divided into three parts, a playground, a plot for individual gardens belonging to each boy, and a garden to supply their own table. In fair weather the boys worked in their gardens, raising food for their own consumption, or played games on the recreation fields; in bad weather fully equipped playhouses were available On the playgrounds the boys built a group of cabins, called "Crony Village," from lumber, brick, and mortar supplied by the school, and in perfect privacy roasted potatoes over hot stones or cooked the small game they trapped or shot with bow and arrow in the nearby woods. Since neither of the masters was married, Cogswell's sister served as hostess to the students at frequent teas, earning their uninhibited and lifelong affection by her graciousness. Later, as the school's enrollment grew, each residence house was supplied with a housemother to mend torn coats, offer advice, and in general to provide the motherly touch necessary to ten- and twelve-year-olds.

The social life of the school was normal and pleasant. Balls were frequently held at which both faculty and students enjoyed themselves thoroughly in the company of the ladies invited from the village, as young Samuel Ward wrote his parents of a Twelfth-Night celebration:

> Truly it was worth being seen . . . ; a number of ladies all dancing to the sound of the violin played by no common fiddler, but by one of the

finest players I ever heard, together with a tambourine that one of the boys played extremely well. At every interval cake, wine, and whips were brought first to the ladies, then to the boys It lasted till near eleven o'clock. Mr Bancroft and several masters danced with the ladies and the hall was decorated with evergreens

Forbidden, except with special permission, to go into Northampton, the boys kept their wants supplied through Cogswell's weekly shopping expeditions. Friday night each boy put a slip of paper with his name and the purchase desired printed upon it into a box, from which it was collected by Cogswell the following morning. At a group meeting on Saturday the articles were distributed from Cogswell's pockets, toys, caps, whistles, guns, and the like. Discipline was, for the first few years, easily taken care of, a great feat in a land and time in which schoolmaster-baiting was the rule, but the patience and friendliness of the two young men soon convinced the boys that they were no ordinary masters. "Let flogging be reserved for brutes," Bancroft said. "Men are rational, and we must punish the mind for its offenses." Loss of meals or confinement to rooms was the usual penalty meted out for an infraction of the rules, while incarceration in the "dungeon," a dark basement room, was the most stringent punishment known at Round Hill, carried out only upon extreme occasion As the prospectus had promised, "religion was awakened and exercised," but in a broadly tolerant and unobtrusive way. Every morning of the week found the boys assembled for fifteen minutes of prayer and Scripture reading, and on Sunday they formed in three lines outside the buildings, Unitarian, Orthodox, and Episcopalian, an instructor at the head of each line, and marched off to their respective churches.

Classroom life was organized on the same novel lines that Bancroft had applied successfully to his Harvard classes in Greek. No definite sections were formed in any class, each boy being instead assigned to the book deemed proper for his state of advancement, told to prepare as much matter as he wished, and ordered to report to the master when he was ready to recite When the boy came up to the master he was questioned on the text of his assignment with great attention to detail and accuracy. At the first slip, he was sent back to his seat to repair the deficiency, coming forward once more only when no other student was ready to recite. The advantage of the system lay in the fact that no boy studied

with reference to the progress of another, and while a student was allowed full opportunity to learn all that his interest prompted him to learn, the progress of the rest of the class neither retarded nor hurried him

After the first successful year Round Hill grew rapidly. At the opening of the term in 1824 the two schoolmasters felt sufficiently secure to negotiate for the outright purchase of the ground and buildings, which they succeeded in obtaining for $12,000. In spite of the feeling between Bancroft and Harvard, the school had the support of Kirkland and the Trustees, and the Harvard Corporation loaned $8,000 of the necessary amount, while the first year's profits and the masters' savings supplied most of the balance. In subsequent years, Round Hill saw an influx of students and a series of distinguished visitors, men from all over the world who were interested in this new educational venture — Lafayette, Duke Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar, the Englishmen Wortley, Stanley, Labouchere, and Denison, and later such men as Morpeth, Tocqueville, Lyell, and others. General Winfield Scott came, and the little boys stood in line to shake his hand, expecting at least a lion's roar from so famous a warrior and highly disappointed at his shrill and feeble tenor voice As the reputation of the school spread, the boys from the best families of New England began to come, and names such as Ward, Amory, Appleton, Peake, Forbes, Howe, Livingston, and Brevoort appeared on the rolls. Boys came, sooner or later, from twelve states stretching from Louisiana to Florida to Michigan to Tennessee, and from Canada, the West Indies, Mexico, and Brazil The Channings sent young Ellery, and in the school's second year a solemn youngster named John Lothrop Motley entered Cogswell, recognizing Motley's brilliance, gave the lad special attention, lent him Hume's *History of England,* and talked with him about Europe and Germany, perhaps planting in his mind the seeds that grew into *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* twenty years after. The school was on the way to success, and Bancroft, exhilarated, felt that he had at last found his proper function in society. "There is nothing half so delightful to me," he told Jared Sparks in September of 1824, "as the hope of being a useful citizen, of contributing in my humble sphere to disseminate the principles of justice, liberty, and learning."

With the expansion of the student body came naturally enough

an expansion of the curriculum — elocution, bookkeeping, logic, horticulture, statistics, surveying, drawing, music, dancing, and art. By 1826 there were one hundred and thirty-five students; and, in addition to Bancroft and Cogswell, ten teachers, whom Ticknor at Harvard called "the ablest body of instructors in the country." Each modern foreign language was taught by a native speaker of the tongue, a rare phenomenon even in a college of the 1820's. G. H. Bode taught German and Greek, Beck, a German, taught Latin and gymnastics, Donato Gherardi, who met and married Bancroft's sister Jane at Round Hill, handled classes in Latin and Italian, C C. Felton and Francis Grund, both destined to become widely known as scholars, taught mathematics; Hentz taught French; William Hutchens, writing; W. D King, elocution; A. F. Villeneuve, French, and A. X San Martin, Spanish. Probably no group of boys in America had such broad and intensive training as did the students at Round Hill from 1823 to 1831; nevertheless, in its very thoroughness, ironically enough, lay the reason for the school's eventual destruction

For two or three years Bancroft did little more than work with his boys at Round Hill, happy in the knowledge that he had found his place in society and that he was well on the way to revolutionizing native educational theory to the end that America might be the best-educated country in the world Despite his previous conviction that he was suited to the role of schoolmaster, he found by degrees, however, that he was drifting farther and farther from the administration of the school, leaving such duties to the more capably executive Cogswell "It was an unwise thing in me to have made myself a schoolmaster," he admitted later "That was the kind of occupation to which I was not peculiarly adapted, and in which many of inferior abilities and attainments could have succeeded as well." Bancroft was a scholar at heart, and it was not long before he found it difficult to pursue his own studies and still teach his classes properly. He was interested in classical scholarship, in German poetry, in history (particularly Roman), in anything, in fact, that relieved the tedium of classroom duties. He translated for the American and English editions *The History of the Political System of Europe*, the work of his old German teacher Arnold H. L Heeren, and when the inadequacy of the average classical grammar led him to an interest in textbooks, he spent what time he could spare for three successive years in trans-

lating and editing the best of the German books, Buttmann's Greek grammar in 1824, Jacob's Latin reader in 1825, Buttmann's *Cornelius Nepos* in 1826, and later Zumpt's Greek grammar in 1829.

The truth was that Bancroft was not cut to the schoolmaster pattern. He was more interested in learning himself than in helping others to learn, and it was obvious to his students that his mind was far from the classroom. Nearly every day he forgot to bring his spectacles to class, and occasionally he would arrive with one [illegible] copy of *Peregrine Pickle* or *Roderick Random* from his desk and read it to the class until their laughter woke the master up. His dreaminess, his prancing walk, and his habit of cocking his head to one side — a result of his nearsightedness — provided fuel for countless schoolboy jokes. The pupils regularly stripped his private garden plot of vegetables, to be consumed in the huts of Crony Village, and he became accustomed to finding debris of all kinds piled on and in his classroom desk. The students named him "The Critter," and a print of him, made from a whittled lead plate, as an erect and severe Prussian drillmaster with a pointed Satanic tail, circulated surreptitiously among the boys. His nearsightedness made disciplinary violations the easier. Boys crept out of his classes on all fours after roll had been taken, and since he was usually unable to identify the culprit, he was frequently the target for wads of paper, pencils, and spitballs as he sat behind his desk — once a boy threw an overripe muskmelon from the rear of the room, hitting him squarely in the face. Under such conditions Bancroft became weary and disgusted with his work, and he wrote to Kirkland in the fall of 1827, after four years of schoolmastering:

> I sigh for the enjoyment of study and the delight and pride of new acquisitions; a spirit within me repines, that my early manhood should be employed in restraining the petulance and assisting the weakness of children, when I am conscious of sufficient courage to sustain collisions with men.

The years at Round Hill, however, were not all unpleasant ones for Bancroft. The hours of study and the pursuit of learning com-

pensated for the increasingly wearisome duties of the classroom. and a stream of visitors and acquaintances came to Northampton to call In the spring of 1826 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a young and eager pilgrim to Germany as Bancroft himself had once been, came to ask advice; he could not be sure whether to do his work in Germany, France, Spain, or Italy Bancroft and Cogswell put his mind at rest, advised a year at Gottingen, and wrote him letters of introduction to their old professors A little later Caleb Cushing, of Bancroft's class at Harvard, came, asking about the expenses of living abroad. Other Harvard men stopped in to observe the workings of the experimental school that had caused so much comment Occasional invitations came to preach in nearby pulpits, and a sermon on *Temperance*, given in Boston, led Emerson to note in his journal that Bancroft spoke "moral poetry," and to adopt its central idea for his poem "Pan."

In 1826 the young schoolmaster, twenty-six, successful, and handsome, began for the first time in his life to think of marriage. He mentioned the matter to Sparks in one of his numerous letters to the editor, and upon receiving little encouragement from the older man, replied "A good wife, with beauty enough to satisfy, warm affections enough to cheer, intelligence enough to please, cheerfulness enough to lighten the dark hours of this mortal state — that is not to be coveted, say you?"

The occasion for the young man's sudden interest in marriage seems to have been his introduction during that year to Sarah Dwight, an attractive visitor to Northampton from Springfield. Sarah's mother had been a Shepard of Northampton, the family that had originally owned Round Hill, and it was probably during one of her visits with her grandparents that she caught the attention of the youthful teacher Hers was an old and powerful Springfield family, and the connection was an advantageous one, both socially and financially, for Bancroft. The Dwights were all shrewd men — manufacturers, merchants, lawyers, bankers — with fingers in many a Massachusetts pie. The family fortune was founded on potash works, iron foundries, gin distilleries, banks, stores, and factories, and Sarah's father, Jonathan Dwight, was one of Springfield's richest men He was a Harvard graduate of the class of 1793, a sharp lawyer with a taste for banking and Whig politics; he had served terms at different times in both houses of the Massachusetts legislature, possessed a thriving law practice, owned a chain of

stores through seven Massachusetts towns, and with his sons controlled the boards of two Springfield banks. Sarah, twenty-three when Bancroft met her, was a gentle and beautiful girl, and after a year of courtship they were married on March 1, 1827, at the Dwight home in Springfield. From the point of view of the ten-year-old Sam Ward it was a wonderful gastronomic event.

Mr. Bancroft is MARRIED to Miss Dwight. He has now come to live in his new house, which is one of the neatest houses on the inside I ever saw . . He gave his wedding ball last Friday, to which I and five other boys were invited and had a royal time We were up till TWELVE O'CLOCK. We had refreshments handed round for the first hour, then went into the supper room, where there was a large table literally groaning under the weight of the eatables In the middle of the table there was a large wedding cake, profusely ornamented with gold and sugar. All around it were syllabubs, whips, soft custards, blanc mange, oranges, apples, hams, tongues, sweetmeats, pastries, wine, and champagne.

Had Bancroft restricted his activities through the years 1823–30 solely to school-teaching, he no doubt would have become bored with Round Hill sooner than he did. But he was a scholar, with a broad and deep interest in literature, and at least part of his inattention to his classroom duties stemmed from his mounting interest in his own writing. With the Everetts, Ticknor, and Cogswell, Bancroft was one of a small group of men in New England who had an acquaintance with German thought and letters. Although the influence of German settlement in the United States was later to loom very large, America in the years 1800 to 1830 gained what little it knew of German poetry, drama, and criticism mostly at second-hand through British channels. A few notices of publication, a few translations, a few reviews of German poetry and prose (notably Everett's of Goethe and Ticknor's of "Michael Stiefel") had appeared in the magazines prior to 1820, when Bancroft returned from Europe Yet, within the span of two decades, German thought became one of the greatest influences in American intellectual life, transplanted to American soil by the few indefatigable pioneers who brought it back with them from Bonn, Heidelberg, and Gottingen.

Bancroft's part in the movement began modestly when, shortly after Round Hill opened its classes, he wrote a review of Schiller's minor poems for the October, 1823, number of the *North Ameri-*



ROUND HILL SCHOOL

I State of the Question

The subject of education in all its parts has [illegible] the object of public attention. Our political condition gives promise that free discussions respecting education will lead to important results. As we have no ancient institutions to control [illegible] of union and perpetuate lifeless forms, and as establishments for liberal education are now first rising into existence the subject has novelty for us, and invites inquiry, the more as the results of inquiry will have a practical influence. While those who [illegible] improve existing institutions are in other countries are often in collision with the established governments, with us the career is opened for [illegible] to be excited in advancing any part of our social interests, [illegible] apprehend except from the ignorant & the corrupt [illegible] subject, the [illegible] national education we have only to ask [illegible] what means [illegible] are absolutely the best. The system adapted to promote the diffusion of knowledge & entire freedom from

THE OPENING PAGE OF BANCROFT'S ESSAY, "OF THE LIBERAL EDUCATION OF BOYS"

can Review, the most distinguished of the New England journals. Alexander Everett had contributed an article on Doering's *Life of Schiller* to the April number, and Bancroft's review was intended to be a companion piece Little notice had been taken of the German poet up to that time, except for a short notice of his works in an obscure magazine some two years before, and the twin reviews attracted favorable attention. Schiller, said Bancroft, was a virtuous poet, one who "united the eloquence of virtue to the inspiration of poetry" He had purity of taste, perfection of style, a delicate mind, and an unswerving belief in man's nobility, grounds which seemed to Bancroft sufficient to justify judgment of him as greater than Goethe, for although "we may learn from Goethe what the world is," Schiller, the moralist and idealist, "teaches us what it should be." To illustrate his point Bancroft included five excellent translations, Schiller's *Hope, The Ideal, The Complaint of Ceres, Fridolin*, and *The Dignity of Woman* The brilliance of the review, however, and the wide acquaintance with German literature that it displayed, attracted the attention of Jared Sparks, who had purchased a controlling share of the journal in 1823, supplanting Edward Everett as its editor shortly afterwards. Sparks, a Harvard graduate of the class of 1815, remembered the [illegible] llege days, for his last two years at [illegible] croft's first two Interested as he [illegible] — in Greece, Italy, South America, or wherever it occurred — Sparks marked the younger man as a potentially valuable contributor. When Bancroft wrote to Sparks in November of 1823, offering reviews of Buttmann's grammar and Jacob's reader, Sparks penned his acceptance immediately, adding, "I expect this will induce you to favor the N.A. with an article as often as possible. I should like a long, learned, wise, and practical article on your mode of education in Germany."

Instead Bancroft began, but never completed, an article on the subject then closest to his heart, "Of the Liberal Education of Boys," intended not only to display his educational philosophy but possibly also to stir interest in Round Hill through the pages of the *North American*. Education was, in his opinion as it was in Thomas Jefferson's, vital to a democracy. Its aim must be to instill in the citizen "a moral courage to shrink from no responsibility, to solve all doubts, to decide when conflicting arguments

leave common minds to hesitate." We must educate the youth of the land to produce leaders, said Bancroft, leaders necessary to our way of life, for although natural genius might occasionally bring a man to the top, "when a mind that has been splendidly endowed by nature, is in addition disciplined and formed by methodical instruction, it attains to a greater degree of singular and unexpected brilliance."

The two reviews of Buttmann and Jacob appeared shortly after, in January and April of 1824. A review of Heeren's *Politics in Ancient Greece,* which Bancroft was translating at the time, one of Somerville's *Letters on France,* and an essay on "The Value of Classical Learning" followed in later numbers. Some readers, wrote Sparks in February, objected to the *North American's* policy as "too Germanized"; could Bancroft in the future say a complimentary word in regard to British publications? Bancroft replied affirmatively, adding that he was working on an article concerning German poetry for the October number, an article which, it turned out, became a review of Goethe's *Werke,* one of Bancroft's best pieces of periodical criticism. Goethe, he believed, was "a consummate genius" and a master of his art, but he tempered his praise by pointing out the German's lack of a sense of moral beauty; he was "a poet, whom universal consent would revere as one of the greatest of all time, if he had connected the culture of art with the service of humanity." The charge was not unusual, except that it was fairly temperate. Emerson, for example, felt that Goethe was incapable of "surrendering himself to the moral sentiments," and other American critics had made much less restrained attacks upon Goethe's morality.

Sparks had previously pointed out diplomatically to Bancroft certain effulgences of style which required alteration and which were often altered at the editorial desk. In July, when Bancroft submitted the Goethe article, he cautioned Sparks to "make no omissions nor alterations. . . . I have written with great care, and will be personally responsible for every word of the article." To which Sparks replied, "The frequent recurrence of such words as *emotions, love, affection, sympathy, sensation, feeling,* carry you sometimes into more soft abstractions than is fully consistent with the dignity of the subject." In particular he pointed out the phrase *oozy maid* in one of the translations, and advised the excision of the entire poem, *The Dance of the Dead,* for reasons of taste.

"Strike out all that is sentimental," replied Bancroft. "I rely much on your judgment to befriend me," and the objectionable phrase was changed to *glittering maid*

Continuing his work in introducing the titans of German literature to the American public, Bancroft wrote a review of Herder's poems for the issue of January, 1825. If Schiller ranked first and Goethe second, Herder in Bancroft's estimation ranked third in the hierarchy of German poetry His mind was truly poetic and his sensibilities delicate, yet he never achieved, said his critic, the production of great verse, for he lacked originality This article precipitated a near-quarrel between the editor and his brilliant young contributor. In the first place, Bancroft had offered in September a manuscript on "Discipline, i.e. the proper manner of managing boys", but Sparks rejected it. Before the Herder review was submitted, he warned Bancroft of the stylistic extravagances he had spoken of before, telling him that he would accept no contributions he could not revise as he wished. The manuscript arrived at the *Review* offices accompanied by a curt and somewhat arrogant note "Whenever I express my feelings and the results of my own thoughts, there must be no hand at work but my own." Sparks was inflexible· "I shall always omit that which I do not like, as being the invariable rule by which I am guided in all cases" Fortunately the manuscript required only minor changes to which Bancroft grudgingly assented.

The disagreement over the Herder article was not the last encounter of wills between the two. Not long afterwards Sparks requested that Bancroft write a review of Pickering's *Greek Lexicon*, to which the young critic readily agreed Judge Pickering's Greek, however, was decidedly amateurish, and his lexicon stood little chance before the pen of Bancroft, trained in the finest schools of German classical criticism But Pickering was a judge and a powerful Federalist politician; therefore Sparks, deciding that discretion was the wiser policy, cut from Bancroft's manuscript all that was derogatory to Pickering's book, wrote some innocuous comments to replace it, and published an article that had little to commend it except a few passages on the development of lexicons as Bancroft had originally written them Bancroft was angry, and protested violently, but to no avail He and Sparks remained friends, but he looked with suspicion on Sparks for the duration of his connection with the journal. But notwithstanding the occasional disagree-

ments that developed, the relations established between the two men proved fortunate for Bancroft. The *North American* gave him a medium of publication at the time he most needed it, while Sparks' interest in his work stimulated and encouraged his writing. His frequent clashes with the editor developed in him a sense of independence and self-direction, and Sparks did succeed, despite Bancroft's protests, in making him aware of some of his major stylistic faults.

The years 1824 to 1826 found Bancroft attempting various articles, one on German methods of physical education, one on American novels, and one on classical grammars, all of which came to naught. Although as befitted a student of Dissen and Eichhorn, he contributed two essays on "The Value of Classical Learning" to the *North American* in July of 1824 and in July of 1826, it was clear that his best work was to be done in literary criticism. The publication of the three brilliant articles on Schiller, Goethe, and Herder in less than three years attracted attention to Bancroft, and he was soon known as one of the most promising young literary critics in America, for not even Ticknor and Everett had done more authoritative work on German literature than he. *The North American Review* carried prestige, and its wide circulation (five subscriptions went as far as Calcutta) brought Bancroft's name before the New England public perhaps more than did his connection with Round Hill. The young man began to have visions of a career as a critic and editor, rather than as a schoolmaster, and in the years 1827 to 1830 the reception of the articles which came from his pen seemed to lend some credence to the hope. In April, 1827, Sparks published his review of the poetry of Mrs. Felicia Hemans, an excellent piece of work in which Bancroft set forth his most complete statement of his idea of the place of "moral excellence" in art, the key to his literary creed. The duty of the poet, he said, is to discern amidst superstition and untruth the nobility of human nature and its connection with God Poetry must "delight and instruct" mankind It must exhibit "moral justice"; that is, it must show vice punished, and must never attribute to vice the traits of goodness. That art which does not contain morality can be neither beautiful nor true; neither can it be enduring, for vice is transient, and only "all that favors truth and goodness is of universal and perpetual interest. . . . These are but plain inferences from facts in the history of literature."

The critical theory which this review outlined Bancroft applied to the fullest extent in a series of articles on German literature which he was writing during the summer of 1827, and which appeared in Walsh's *American Quarterly Review* in September, 1827, March, 1828, and September, 1828 Under the guise of reviewing three books, by Franz Horn, Lessing, and Wieland, he published what turned out to be the first complete history of German thought to appear in an American periodical, covering the entire sweep of Teutonic literature from its beginning to Goethe and filling more than a hundred pages of print. With this series Bancroft attained major stature as a critic, he had done nothing so comprehensive, authoritative, or brilliant before, and his critical powers were never again at so high a point. An introductory chapter, "General Characteristics," outlined the forces operative upon German art — the geographical position of the country, its wild and romantic scenery, its political organization, its history, its religious creeds, its social and economic structure — a concise but complete survey of contemporary Germany and the forces which had shaped its being. From the middle ages to the Renaissance he traced skilfully and clearly the dawning development of German culture, to the day of Klopstock, Lessing, and Wieland. German science, educational theory, politics, and philosophy came under his scrutiny, until, drawing upon his previously published reviews, he closed with a discussion of Schiller and Goethe Bancroft, in tracing the intellectual history of Germany, spoke authoritatively of nearly ninety authors, some of them practically unknown in America, evincing a fund of knowledge matched by few men in New England, and stamping himself as one of the foremost critics of German culture on this side of the Atlantic.

The *American Quarterly Review* series proved to be the last of his distinguished contributions to the journals A few other reviews from his pen appeared in 1828 and 1829 — Von Dohm's *Memoirs,* Dwight's *Travels in Germany, The Letters of Joseph II of Austria* — but these added little to his established reputation. In 1829 he began collecting material for a book on Connecticut, a history of the state, the river, and of illustrious Connecticut men, but it too came to nothing. In 1831, while reviewing a volume of Boeckh's *Economy of Athens* for the *North American Review,* he made his first public reference to the slavery question, which Garrison's *Liberator* (its first issue had appeared that year) had put

squarely before New England. Garrisonian abolition was militant, emotional, uncompromising, and perhaps intemperate; the editor's words, "I am in earnest — I will not equivocate — I will not excuse — and I will be heard," struck the keynote of his crusade. Bancroft, writing in the staid *North American* but three months after Garrison's challenge focused attention on the issue, was highly moderate in the expression of his own views. Boeckh, he pointed out, had found that among the economic causes of the fall of the Greek city-state slavery had been paramount; history seemed to show that a slave-labor system in a democratic state was economically undesirable The whole matter occupied but a few paragraphs, and though the United States was not mentioned by name, Bancroft's inference was unmistakable. His interest in the slavery controversy was further shown by his attendance at meetings of the Negro Colonization Society, where he heard Edward Everett and the Virginian, Senator Archer, speak, and his letters to his wife during the years 1830–33 indicate that like the majority of educated New Englanders, he was unsympathetic to slavery, though unwilling to make an issue of it.

The truth was that Bancroft was weary of controversy and of Round Hill. The school was failing slowly, the life of a scholar and critic increasingly appealed to him, and marriage into the Dwight family opened new avenues of escape to a schoolmaster who was tired of teaching. His contributions to the *North American* and the reputation they engendered had aroused in him the hope that he might carve out for himself a career as a literary man. He could not support himself and his wife, he knew, on the meager proceeds of journal contributions, but the Dwights, with their network of business enterprises, could and would, no doubt, take him into their firm, providing him with a satisfactory means of support until he made a name for himself in the society of letters. The larger arena of public life, where he might "make collisions with men," held more attraction for him as the months passed Finally, in March, 1830, he sold his interest in Round Hill to Cogswell, the terms of the agreement stating that Bancroft was to continue for a year at a salary of $1600, Cogswell to give his ex-partner a note for his share of the school's assessed value less outstanding debts. (Ten years later Bancroft wrote across the face of the note, "This debt was never paid, and its payment will never be asked.") While Cogswell spent many days in Boston, New York, and Washington

during the rest of the year, attempting to interest prominent men in buying stock in the failing school, Bancroft chafed in the classroom. "In one short month," he wrote Edward Everett in August, 1831, "I cease to be a schoolmaster! What is to be done?"

Cogswell carried on alone at the school, but within three years Round Hill passed out of existence. He offered it to Longfellow, but the young poet was unable to provide the $3,000 necessary to repair the run-down buildings and to add to the depleted staff. Thus ended Bancroft's educational experiment, a failure because it was too far in advance of its time It was fundamentally impossible to fit the *gymnasium* to the existing school systems of the country, as Bancroft and Cogswell had intended to do, and although Round Hill had succeeded in teaching boys as they had never been taught in New England, it was out of adjustment with both the secondary schools and the colleges. Round Hill boys, in effect, covered during their days with Bancroft and Cogswell the first two years of the college curriculum In Greek, for example, they went as far as Pindar and Callimachus, and their eight-hour final examination in mathematics, covering differential calculus, exceeded anything offered by Harvard during its first two years. The students who left Northampton were prepared to enter college with at least a year's advanced standing, but the laws of Harvard held that those who entered on such a basis nevertheless had to pay tuition for the preceding years, and the shrewd New England Yankees could see little reason to pay twice for a boy's education Yet Round Hill was not wholly a failure It was the most striking experiment of the decade, a pioneer attempt to combine the systems of Fellenberg, Pestalozzi, and the Prussian *gymnasia* into an institution suited to the intellectual life of America. Not until Bronson Alcott's Temple School in Boston in 1828, likewise financially unsuccessful, did anyone establish as original and distinguished a school as Round Hill.

The severance of his connection with Round Hill left Bancroft, at the age of thirty-one, to start all over again at the business of making a mark in life The school had been, of course, successful from an educational point of view, and fortunately for him, his departure from it had been financially well-timed. The royalties from his texts and from his translations of Heeren, the funds salvaged from the school, and his savings, were enough to allow him a year or so of retirement, had he wished it, while he devoted him-

self to literary activity. He moved from Northampton to Springfield, to his wife's home, and he moved also into the Dwight family circle. The Dwights were hardheaded men of business, and it was clear to them that Bancroft should, as befitted a son-in-law who was now a member of the dynasty, work his way into the family corporation. Thus in 1831 Bancroft began his apprenticeship, making frequent trips to Washington, New York, and the West to look after the Dwight interests, learning the intricacies of banking, manufacturing, and trade. But he knew quite well, it is probable, that he was not a businessman, any more than he was a poet or a schoolmaster. In New England there were but two ways to attain eminence — to make history or to write it. Accordingly he set out to do both, a double career that was to occupy the remaining sixty years of his life.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Historian and the Politicians 1831–1845

THE CHAPTERS of a man's life neither begin nor end so abruptly or precisely as those of a biography recounting it, and George Bancroft's career was no exception Since he was always interested in more than one field of activity at once, his intellectual curiosity leading him constantly into new fields, Bancroft's middle years were full and varied While he studied for the ministry and preached, he wrote poetry While he taught school he preached and wrote criticism During the late years of the Round Hill experiment he dabbled in politics As his political activity grew in importance, he began to write history When he left Round Hill, although he probably did not realize it, the pattern of his subsequent career was set, and for the rest of his life — more than half the nineteenth century — he was known both as the dean of American historical writing and as a shrewd political figure in Massachusetts and the nation

George Bancroft's rise to prominence as a politician provides the most fascinating chapter of his middle life. Massachusetts in the 1820's was undergoing a political, social, and economic change. The Bay State was shifting from a dependence on agriculture and shipping to manufacturing Wealth was beginning to concentrate in Boston and the seaboard towns, leaving the rural areas often dissatisfied and impoverished. The state thought in Federalist terms — society, business, religion, economics, politics, and literature were all clearly dominated by the conservative elements. In 1824 Massachusetts politics seemed to consist almost entirely of Daniel Webster (an Exeter alumnus like Bancroft), and in that year Edward Everett was able to say that Jackson's men were "hardly more than a coterie of a few people." The seaboard mer-

chants and bankers ruled the state until the twenties and gave Massachusetts life its distinctive tone. The Lawrences, Appletons, Lowells, Amorys, Gardners, Bootts, Brookses, Perkinses, and others, their family fortunes solidly grounded in the old China trade or the new textile industry, formed a tightly-knit, blue-blooded aristocracy.

But though the conservative mercantile aristocracy of the seaboard governed Massachusetts, there were restless murmurings against its domination. The character of the state was not wholly consistent. The borders of the old Pilgrim and Puritan settlements, though they had by now grown dim, still marked the boundary between farming and commercial areas. To the east lay the older, populous, wealthy counties; here in the seaport and industrial towns immigrants were arriving to form a new laboring class whose interests ran directly counter to those of the Federalists. To the west lay the newer, poorer, more sparsely settled districts which, though they had drawn from the older communities, possessed a distinctive quality of their own. Here in the backcountry lived the descendants of Daniel Shays and his rebellious farmers, a thin substratum of resistance to Federalist rule that had lasted for half a century The era of good feeling was rapidly drawing to a close, and the day of Webster was nearly over Coming was the day of the mechanic and the farmer, the day of Andrew Jackson.

George Bancroft's entry into politics came, then, at the inception of a period of change, at a time when the balance of political power in the state was beginning to shift geographically westward and socially downward. The city of Worcester, situated on the line of demarcation between seaboard and backcountry, illustrated the approaching cleavage between class and interest admirably, for in Worcester, the city of Bancroft's boyhood, were to be found gathered together all the antagonistic tendencies that characterized Massachusetts — demoracy and aristocracy, liberalism and orthodoxy, banker, mechanic, and farmer. The city had earned, by reason of its location, a certain individuality. It was never clearly conservative nor clearly radical, its prevailing cast of character never sharply defined. George Bancroft's own political ideas reflected Worcester's divided loyalties until, at some point between the years 1823 and 1826, his thinking crystallized into a new and permanent pattern

Despite his father's religious liberalism, Bancroft's family back-

ground had always been politically stable. Aaron Bancroft had been a Federalist of the old school, a staunch supporter of New England political conservatism, and his son, who evinced little interest in politics at all as a youth, seemed at first to follow him. Theological studies and school teaching took up his time until the early years of Round Hill, and by his own choice he preferred to remain aloof from the crowd, to spend his time with books and boys "I love to observe the bustle of the world," he told President Kirkland in 1823, "but I detest mixing in it I like to watch the shouts of the multitude, but had rather not scream with it"

Three years later, in 1826, the town of Northampton asked Bancroft, as one of its most distinguished and learned citizens, to deliver the annual Fourth of July oration. The young schoolmaster, three years a resident, had no party affiliations, nor had he shown more than a casual interest in political matters Yet the Northampton oration turned out to be the beginning of a long political career embodying the principles of a political theory which guided him throughout his life. On that day of July 4, 1826, John Adams was on his deathbed not far away in Nahant, and Thomas Jefferson lay dying at Monticello. It was the Virginian, however, and not the New England Federalist, whom the youthful Bancroft hailed as America's great statesman, it was Jefferson whom he characterized as one "whose principles are identified with the character of our government, and whose influence with the progress of civil liberty throughout the world" The voice of the dying Jefferson rang through the speech.

There is no safe criterion of opinion but the careful exercise of public judgment, and in the science of government, as elsewhere, the deliberate convictions of mankind, reasoning on the causes of their own happiness, their own wants and interests, are the surest revelations of political truth.

"With the people the power resides, both theoretically and practically . . . The popular voice is all powerful with us, this is our oracle; this, we acknowledge, is the voice of God" — strange words from the son of a New England Federalist, and strange words in conservative Massachusetts A few years later many were to accuse the young orator of opportunism when he chose to join the party of Jackson, but in Northampton in 1826 Bancroft's choice had

been made. When the time came for choosing sides he could by no means have chosen anything but the party of Jefferson and Jackson, for his convictions were already fixed. Bancroft knew quite well that the Northampton speech might cause some disturbance among his friends, few of whom could subscribe to the anti-Federalist views expressed therein On July 1 he warned his fiancée half-seriously, "If your father should think of coming, you must tell him what a radical, democratic, levelling, unrighteous oration I have written." The Dwights were solid old-line Whigs, and Bancroft did well to warn them, for they could hardly expect to hear such radical talk from the son of Aaron Bancroft and a future member of their family.

For five years after his Northampton speech Bancroft said nothing further about his politics, for the difficulties of Round Hill School and his foray into the world of literary criticism required his undivided attention It was perhaps diplomatic that he did not, for his marriage into the Dwight family had placed him definitely in the fold of the conservatives. Furthermore, his favorite sister Eliza had recently married John Davis, a rising Whig politician, and between the Davises and the Dwights there was little room for radicalism It was expected that Bancroft would gradually work his way into the Dwight banking business, and the Northampton speech reflected none of the spirit demanded of a sound and conservative banker.

At the moment that Bancroft spoke on that July 4 in Northampton, however, strange things were happening in Massachusetts, and when Bancroft finally retired from teaching at Round Hill five years later he found that public life offered new and obviously worthwhile opportunities to a man with a glib tongue, a set of liberal political principles, and the time and money with which to build himself a reputation. The party of Jackson, long under the thumb of the Whig descendants of the old Massachusetts Federalists, threatened to rise to a new level, building itself slowly but certainly to a position where it might loosen the grasp of the old-line politicians on the state. It needed leaders. The men who came to Boston to build fortunes — David Henshaw in drugs and banking, J. K. Simpson in furniture, Amasa Walker in shoes — finding themselves shut out of the politics and the society of the old established families, promptly sided with the middle and lower class elements of the city, the mudsills of Jackson's party. Henshaw, in

the twenties, soon attained the leadership of the urban Democrats in the struggle for power against the Whigs of John Quincy Adams. Marcus Morton, one-time acting governor and judge of the state supreme court, consolidated the rural Democrats, the anti-Whigs of the farms and rural towns, and joined forces with the Boston group led by Henshaw. Adams and the Whigs carried Massachusetts in the elections of 1824, but the lines of cleavage between city and country, between aristocrat and democrat, became for the first time politically sharp and clear, and the display of power made by the Democrats of Morton and Henshaw let the Whigs know that a battle was beginning

The rise of Andrew Jackson helped clarify political alignments in Massachusetts. Henshaw and Morton tied their party to the star of Old Hickory, and when Jackson went into office in 1828 David Henshaw became, as his reward for assistance in the campaign, Collector of the Port of Boston, a position carrying with it tremendous patronage possibilities and virtual leadership of the Jacksonian party in Massachusetts The desks of the custom house at the waterfront were filled with Henshaw men, and the long arm of the spoils system reached into every available appointive office. With the name of Andrew Jackson inscribed on the party banner, the machine of Henshaw and Morton began to roll slowly forward. In 1828 Morton, running for governor, polled twelve per cent of the state's vote In 1830 he polled thirty per cent. He lost, of course, both times to the Whigs' Levi Lincoln, but it was significant that in two years the Democratic party had more than doubled its strength The conservatives of Boston saw, in the little cloud of Democratic votes that grew larger and larger in the distance, an approaching storm

However, even as the fortunes of the Democratic party in Massachusetts began to rise, a new menace appeared in the form of Anti-Masonry. A radical third party, which drew its votes directly from the machine so carefully organized and nurtured by Morton and Henshaw for a decade, the Anti-Masonic group united with evangelical zeal and a certain amount of hysteria all the elements of unrest in the state. Masons, claimed the new party, controlled the important state offices. Even John Quincy Adams had to admit that three quarters of all office holders were members of the secret order, and it appeared to many that the old bugbear of aristocracy, harking back to the days of the Order of the Cincin-

nati, was reappearing in more virulent form. Hate and prejudice swept New England like wildfire when it was rumored that William Morgan of upstate New York had been murdered by the Whigs to prevent exposure of Masonic secrets. Boston's workingmen murmured sullenly, and more and more of them left the Democratic party to flock to the Anti-Masonic standard. In 1831 the untiring candidate Morton lost four per cent of his 1830 vote, mainly to the Anti-Masonic ticket; in the same year Benjamin Hallett, a clever politician from Cape Cod, arrived in the city to organize the Anti-Masonic party into a smooth-working unit. The next election found Morton running a weak third, some two thousand votes behind Hallett's candidate, and it was clear that the Democratic party in Massachusetts faced virtual extinction unless — and this was a harsh choice — it adopted Anti-Masonry as an issue, and absorbed successfully the rapidly growing machine skilfully being constructed by Hallett. And that was not all. To add to the confusion, a fourth party appeared, weak and ill-organized, but nevertheless representing votes diverted from the party of Henshaw and Morton In the middle twenties dissatisfied mechanics, farmers, millworkers, and laborers of all kinds organized the Workingmen's party, and in 1830 at Plymouth, Northampton, and Hampshire it nominated three state senators. The candidate from Northampton refused the nomination; he was one of the town's foremost citizens, George Bancroft.

The sudden appearance of Bancroft, still a teacher at Round Hill, upon the political scene, was neither so surprising nor so casual as it might at first appear Bancroft planned his career in politics cleverly and carefully, and an examination of his actions during the years 1830 to 1835 leads one to the conclusion that for political skill and astuteness he had few equals in Massachusetts, or, for that matter, in all New England. At some time before his departure from Round Hill he decided upon a career in politics; not very long after that he chose his party. He shrewdly guessed that in time the Democratic party would triumph in Massachusetts and in the nation, and that to the few distinguished Democrats, whose record of service was long and faithful, would fall ripe rewards. "I still insist on my old theory," he told Everett a few years later, obviously repeating an oft-expressed conviction, "that the man of letters cannot have brilliant success in politics except on the popular side." Two additional things were necessary, how-

ever, besides the intention to succeed — first, Bancroft must demonstrate that he controlled a bloc of votes large enough to merit consideration from Morton and Henshaw, the party bosses, and second, he must prove without question his adherence to the principles of the Democratic party. It took a little time, but Bancroft accomplished both

Bancroft's nomination to office (a minor office, it is true, but still an office) and his refusal to accept it, caught the attention of both Morton and Henshaw, who no doubt filed his name for future reference Bancroft, it could be assumed, controlled Northampton votes, and it was well-known that he could dictate the policy of the local paper Then, in January of 1831, the *North American Review* published an article over the name of George Bancroft strongly supporting President Jackson in his fight against extension of the charters of the United States Bank, a hot issue in banking Boston The piece, especially since it appeared in the pages of the politically reactionary *Review*, caused angry comment. Alexander Everett, a mild and scholarly Whig, immediately replied to it, and Bancroft's reply to Everett was not accepted. Boston viewed with some trepidation the defection of one of its most brilliant sons to the ranks of Jackson supporters. William Hickling Prescott notified Bancroft that he had produced "a sensation," and Ticknor wrote to warn his friend against association with "Jacksonians and Workies" "Indeed," the author of the article told his bride, "the article on the U. S Bank is the thing which in this quarter has brought upon me the imputation of Jacksonism " The effect was precisely what he desired, for now Massachusetts knew and the Democratic leaders knew that his sympathies lay with the Democratic party As soon as the *Review* was off the press Bancroft saw to it that a reprint went to Martin Van Buren, Jackson's lieutenant, party organizer, and heir-apparent in Washington.

In 1831 he made two trips to the national capital to look after his political fences. "I found by diligent inquiry at the sources," he wrote his wife with some satisfaction in May, "that my course as respects the U S Bank was well approved of." Late in the year his first child was born and died, and the shadow that had fallen upon him once before at the death of his brother John returned A bank in Cleveland, supported by the Dwights and one which he had helped establish, failed, and there were words between Ban-

croft and the Dwights, who no doubt referred more than once to his party affiliations with distaste, and who could hardly have been expected to applaud his article on the Bank.

But in December he was in Washington again, meeting "the roaring lion" Jackson, and calling upon those politicians who might be useful to him. He liked Jackson, who proved to be a dignified and well-bred old man, despite the rumors abroad in New England, except, as Bancroft wrote his wife, "Sparta hath many a wiser man than he." He talked with John Quincy Adams and with Van Buren, listened to Clay and Hayne in the Senate, and attended one of Jackson's notorious White House levees, where he saw "a throng of apprentices, boys of all ages, men not civilized enough to walk about the room with their hats off, the vilest promiscuous medley that ever was congregated in a decent house . . . . , all the refuse that Washington could turn forth from its workshops and stables" When he left for home the key men of the Democratic party knew the name of George Bancroft, and remembered him as a serious and intelligent man whose pen had already lent assistance to their cause

Back in Massachusetts the Whigs decided that Bancroft might listen to reason and that he might be as valuable to them as to the opposition party The secretaryship of state was an appointive office, Bancroft was a well-known scholar and fit for the position, and the Whigs could use some Northampton and Springfield votes. The upshot of it was that the office was offered to him, and he refused. Certainly Henshaw and Morton could have desired no more pertinent hint, yet they did nothing Bancroft had made himself known as a Jackson man through his essay on the Bank; he had made himself known to the leaders in Washington as an aspirant to office and a willing worker; he had twice publicly rejected positions not tendered him by the Democratic party. Nothing could have been more openly an invitation to Henshaw and Morton, who said nothing at the time, for their hands were full with the attempt to keep their machine intact in the face of the efforts of Hallett's Anti-Masons and the Workingmen.

By early 1832 the Democratic party desperately needed an infusion of new blood. For the first time Marcus Morton required urging to enter the gubernatorial race against Lincoln the Whig and Lathrop the Anti-Mason — his influence, said Morton wryly, stretched no farther than Marcus Morton Junior, and he could

not even be certain of his vote. After persuasion he consented to run, and to his surprise pushed Lathrop hard for second place at the polls. The political myopia of Henshaw and Morton prevented them from noting the significant fact that Morton's twenty-three per cent of the vote, plus Lathrop's twenty-four per cent, would have been nearly enough to defeat the Whigs handily, that a coalition of Democrats and Anti-Masons would have spelled something very near success A man was needed in the party to perceive the need for the consolidation of the anti-Whig forces, a man with vision to perceive the need for it and the strength to accomplish it

The man they needed was busy gathering materials for the first volume of the *History of the United States* which was to appear two years later, his historical work, plus the appeals of his wife's family to abjure the "radical" politics he seemed to be favoring, led him to suspend for the moment his political activity Of his venture into history Bancroft left no such record as that of Prescott, who wrote in his journal after searching for a life-work, "I subscribe to the history of Ferdinand and Isabella " Bancroft's letters to his wife and his friends, written before he left Round Hill and in the early eighteen-thirties, gave no evidence of such a dedication to a single great task He was past thirty, and it was clear to him that he could delay no longer in making his mark in the world. Two courses of action lay open. He might pursue a career in politics, for he had made a successful beginning, or he might turn his learning and his intellect to account in some great monument of scholarship His inner struggle was reflected in an untitled article written probably in 1832, an article which he never revised or published, in which he discussed the function of the scholar in a world of action Every young man (though he was thirty-two he clearly had himself in mind) was called upon "to distinguish between the vulgar ambition of personal power, the nobler purpose of rendering benefit to the country or to a whole nation, and that far more healthy and august ambition which seeks the benefit of the whole human race by the discovery and the function or the diffusion of principles and truths of universal efficacy " There were, he continued, three types of scholars: the lowest kind "seeks only its own advancement"; a higher type, the scholar-politician, seeks to advance nations, the highest type of all belongs to those "great high-priests of nature who unfold truths of universal importance, discover powers which give man mastery over his destiny" — Taci-

tus, who taught the evils of despotism, Milton, who showed man the hope of redemption; Columbus, who discovered a world; Galileo; Copernicus; and the rest. It is plain that in the writing of the essay Bancroft, thinking his own way through the problem, made his choice It lay with the "great high-priests of nature" who revealed universal truths to mankind of every nation

In January of 1832 he wrote his wife during a trip to Washington on business for the Dwights that he had been reading Chalmers' *History of the American Colonies*, "a work written in a tory

write the definitive history of the American people; perhaps his father's life of Washington and its success predisposed him to attempt a reconstruction of the national past upon a broader canvas; perhaps his friendship with Jared Sparks, whose monumental *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution* had appeared in 1829 and 1830, led him to enter the field of history in emulation. At least, it is not surprising to find an educated young New Englander turning to history as a career, for interest in the national heritage was reaching a culmination in the Boston of the thirties. Instead of theology, the mind of nineteenth-century Boston stressed history, and the collections of the libraries and societies offered the student tremendous possibilities for research. Sometime in 1832 or 1833 Bancroft perceived in American history the opportunity of discovering those "truths of universal importance" for which the great scholar should search He assumed the task of expressing them.

The historiographical tradition from which Bancroft's work grew was marked by several distinguishing characteristics. In the eighteenth century, the greatest influence on the historians had been the critical, naturalistic philosophy of Bacon, Locke, and Descartes, an attitude of mind that challenged all of the old ideas, ultimately defeated them, and founded new concepts of man and the universe The old idea of social development as a steady retrogression from a primordial state of perfection, of mankind's movement away from a golden age, was displaced by a belief in social evolution as a progressively upward development from the lower stages of civilization, a theory developed by Fontenelle, Vico, Hume, Turgot, Kant, Condorcet, and their followers. The basis

for the approach of the scholar to history broadened, turned naturalistic, scientific, and most of all, rationalistic. The field widened to embrace the history of societies and cultures as well as that of church and state; it discredited miracles and superstitions, and called each fact to the bar of reason for judgment; it saw everything in history as the result of a cause-effect relationship (God, working through his natural laws, the cause, and history the result) ; it related history to philosophy; it gave facts reference to a larger design or scheme behind them, making history, in Bolingbroke's phrase, "philosophy teaching by example." The Rationalistic historians termed their work "objective," even "scientific." In a narrow application it was so, insofar as they attempted to cut away the accretions from the evidence and to find a reasonable explanation for historical cause and effect But actually the conclusions they drew from the facts were fixed before they began. They knew what they believed before they requested the answers from history. The pattern was there, and all they asked was that the facts fall into place in the general design

The Rationalistic school was shortly challenged by a Romantic reaction, personified by a group of historians who were as mystical and obscurantist as their opponents were rational. Their basic doctrine was a belief in the gradual development in a nation of a distinct and unique spirit, a unified and organic development of traditions, customs, laws, and culture which formed, as Ranke named it, the *Zeitgeist* peculiar to a people. History became to them the task of tracing in the past the development of this "genius" in national institutions; it became a means of fixing the national character. It was an emotional approach to history, for it made no other rational attempt to explain the development of these national peculiarities than simply terming them the results of a mystic national spirit

The Romantic approach, with its emphasis upon nationalism, led to the study of the past of single nations or peoples, to the work of explaining the emergence of the national genius and its manifestations in the national life. The American and French Revolutions fostered the growth of national self-consciousness, and the sweep of Napoleon's armies over half the continent brought out the latent nationalism of both the conquered and the untouched countries, a force that affected all fields of national activity in the early decades of the nineteenth century Historians, eager

to analyze the rise of nations, demanded access to hitherto closely guarded records, and the documents of centuries of history were brought to light by collectors and archivists who located and gathered them

With the opening of the records the historians went to work. In the German states, long disunited yet bound closely together by the desire for a self-contained existence, the impetus was especially powerful Eichhorn, Bancroft's teacher and friend at Göttingen, in his *History of German Law and Its Institutions,* traced to its sources in the national spirit the genesis of the Teutonic legal tradition Savigny analyzed Roman law in similar fashion. Stein gathered a group of men about him, trained them, and began the publication in 1819 of the series called *Monumenta Germaniae Historica,* a collection of all the sources of medieval German history. Stein was soon aided by scholars who gave a philosophy to the nationalistic movement — Herder, Schlegel, Schelling, and others — for coincidentally a philosophy of history was developing from the theory of progress held by philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Herder's four-volume *Ideas for the Philosophy of The History of Mankind* set the pattern. reason and justice form the basis for a belief in man's progress through successive stages of civilization; a wise goodness, perhaps divine, disposes man's fate. Transcendental idealism, with its belief that the history of the world was simply the unfolding of the workings of Providence, provided further reinforcement Fichte combined Herder's theory of progress with nationalism, pronouncing the Teutonic peoples the hope of the future; Schelling followed, Hegel's nationalistic *Philosophy of History* saw the past as a record of the desire for freedom in the human spirit, a record of "the government of God, made visible"

The drift of thought in Bancroft's time, deriving from both Rationalist and Romantic historians, was marked therefore by these traits: an attitude of objectivity toward the facts of the past, asking impartiality and freedom from preconception; a belief in progress, buttressed by transcendental idealism and reinforced by the Rationalist faith in an upward social tendency; a demand for the recognition of a controlling plan or scheme behind the shifting facts of history, an interest in the evolution of racial or national institutions, leading to an emphasis upon the "national genius" of a people as the creative force motivating their historical

development, and a philosophy of history that perceived a master pattern, perhaps divine in origin, in the past. The history that Bancroft wrote naturally stemmed from and illustrated these principles. He had studied with some of the men who formulated and practised them; the works of the others he had read, reviewed for the journals, and certainly discussed He was a pioneer insofar as he applied them first to the history of the United States — a history which provided nearly perfect material for their use — but in another sense his work was but the result of a century of historiographical tradition and theory, reflecting its principles and in general agreement with its temper.

It was high time, of course, that a qualified scholar should produce a complete and authoritative history, matured by time and scholarship, of the two centuries and more of life which had passed in America American historical writing prior to the nineteenth century had left a record of frequent attempts and frequent failures to capture the spirit of the past and to evaluate it. The impetus given to historical writing by the attainment of independence was naturally a strong one, and the sudden emergence of national self-interest, brought forth by the Revolution, showed itself in a flood of histories after the turn of the century — histories often incomplete and usually prejudiced, of states or localities or solely of the late war· Proud's *History of Pennsylvania,* Howat's *Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia,* Belknap's *New Hampshire,* Hannah Adams' *Summary History of New England,* Gordon's *History of the Independence of the United States,* Ramsay's *History of the American Revolution,* or Chalmers' work that Bancroft read in 1832. Such writings suffered quite understandably from a tendency to focus attention upon the recent conflict to the neglect of the colonial period, or from concentration upon local interest to the exclusion of the history of the entire nation Not until Abiel Holmes' *American Annals* in 1805 and Benjamin Trumbull's *General History of the United States of America* in 1810 did any author attempt to cover the field of American history from its beginnings. American historiography may be said to have come of age with them, and with men such as Jared Sparks, Peter Force, Belknap, and Benjamin Rush, whose collections of documents and whose encouragement of historical research began the mature historiographical tradition into which Bancroft was born.

With the advantages of three decades of trial and error, of a finely trained and brilliant mind, and a fiery, ardent patriotism, George Bancroft wrote a history of the American nation such as had never been written before.

Through 1832 and 1833 (during the latter year his daughter Louisa was born) Bancroft remained at home, except for infrequent trips to Washington to obtain information for the Dwights about banking legislation, at work on his historical studies. He was not unfamiliar with modern historical methods, for he had studied under Heeren and Schlosser and Ranke and Planck, and as their pupil he could not help betraying the German influence. From Heeren he had probably learned most, and the German's deliberate and objective methods showed clearly in his work. Like Heeren, Bancroft attempted to write history from original sources rather than from secondhand accounts — his teacher's famous differentiation between *Quellen* and *Hulfsmittel*. Neither was Bancroft an utter novice at historical writing. He had translated two of Heeren's books, he had written frequent essays and reviews (some of which remained long unpublished) after 1828 — *Calvin the Reformer, The Wars of Russia and Turkey, The Economy of Athens,* and others. These early minor essays and reviews served as preparation, and in them he developed the individuality of style and approach which characterized his later volumes.

Bancroft's methods of composition were orderly and precise, and his work painstakingly accurate Writing on eight-inch by six-inch paper, he wrote usually but four lines to a page, and then filled up the page with interlinear additions and revisions, often so mutilating his copy that only the most discerning printer could puzzle it out. The same sentence might be revised six or eight times, and each page might go through as many as ten complete rewritings. Arising at five, he sometimes worked twelve and fourteen hours a day. Rarely, said his friends, did he begin his daily task without reading a chapter or two of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* Then, as the sentences of his own prose began to flow easily, he wrote.

In September of 1834, after two years of hard work, George Bancroft published the first volume of his *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent,* covering the period from 1492 to 1660. The preface stated his aims· "I have formed the design of writing a History of the United States from the Dis-

covery of the American Continent to the present time . . . I have dwelt at considerable length on this first period, because it contains the germ of our institutions The maturity of a nation is but the continuation of its youth. The spirit of the colonies demanded freedom from the beginning" His theory of American history, then, as laid down at the outset, was simply to trace the gradual emergence of liberty from its beginnings in the colonial settlements through the years. Regarding his methods, he explained, as the Germans had taught him: "I have desired to give to the work the interest of authenticity. I have applied, as I have proceeded, the principles of historical skepticism . . I have endeavored to impart originality to my narrative by deriving it entirely from writings and sources which were the contemporaries of the events that are described" In other words, for the first time a historian wrote the history of America from something approaching a modern viewpoint, and the result was new and fascinating

The key to his view of historical writing, briefly outlined in his preface, Bancroft explained much more completely in an unpublished, untitled essay that he probably wrote in 1834, and in *The Office of the People in Art, Government, and Religion,* an oration delivered at Williams College in August of 1835, less than a year after the publication of the first volume. The earlier essay treated of the purpose and the function of the historian. Beginning with the assumption that he was to express in numerous other essays and in the subsequent volumes of his history — the belief that "the world is in a constant state of advancement" — he pointed out that "it is the office of history to write the changes in humanity." The function of the historian was therefore simply to discern in the past the evidences of human progress How might the historian fulfill this purpose? By the application of the inductive method, which "leads to the perception of general principles in the causes of events," by a scientific approach to the materials of the past, perceiving laws behind events. The body of Bancroft's essay traced the development of historical writing from ancient to modern times, illustrating the progress in methods The older historians, the chroniclers of Greece, Rome, and France, "sought the causes of events in the personal genius and purposes of individuals," writing history in terms of great men Later historians, even those of the nineteenth century, "considered events in their connection with one another, yet without observing the general prin-

ciples by which that succession is controlled" — that is, they failed to generalize the universal laws of progress from the specific evidence of history. The true historians were those "who traced events not only to their authors and to their immediate courses, but to the place which they occupy in the progress of humanity. They apply the inductive methods to the pursuits of history . . . , and when history is viewed from this point, it is found that humanity is steadily advancing, that the advance of liberty and justice is certain." Such historians, believed Bancroft, wrote history to mark man's progress, using as their touchstone "the *discovery*, the *diffusion*, and the *application* of truth in the histories of men and nations "

The 1835 oration, *The Office of the People in Art, Government, and Religion*, provided an exposition of the philosophy that motivated all of Bancroft's constructive thought in politics, in criticism, and most of all, in his writing of history. It was built about a single central thesis — that is, an unbounded faith in mankind and in man's inherent natural goodness. By divine order, he told his audience, there was implanted in man reason, conscience, benevolence, and a love of beauty. Therefore, he continued, since God has chosen man as the receptacle of reason, man may unerringly discern truth; since he possesses conscience, he knows justice; his friendship for his fellow leads him to benevolence; his innate sense of beauty insures his accuracy in matters of taste and aesthetic judgment Of all these powers within the mind, argued Bancroft, the reason was most powerful; as he defined it, the reason was an intuitive sense and not that logical and rational power usually understood by the ordinary use of the term. "I mean not that faculty," he explained, "which deduces inferences from the experience of the senses, but that higher faculty, which from the infinite treasures of its own consciousness, originates truth . . . , an internal sense which places us in connexion with the world of intelligence and the decrees of God" — an excellent definition of precisely what Ralph Waldo Emerson (and Coleridge, Hegel, and Fichte) meant by the "reason."

Since the reason, Bancroft assured his listeners, is an attribute common to all men, it follows that the common people therefore compose the highest earthly tribunal in matters of government, art, and religion. Here lay the theoretical basis for his political beliefs, the philosophical foundations for his Jacksonism. Govern-

ment was, by Bancroft's definition, the expressed will of the masses, a rule of "moral force" applied by men to themselves How could the truth of these beliefs be proved? First, by the intuitive proofs felt through the very power postulated — the existence of an innate power was proved by an inward psychological consciousness of the power itself. Second, by the study of history, since "the laws of which Reason is conscious can be tested best by experience, and inductions will be the more sure, the larger the experience from which they are drawn" Essentially the oration anticipated and expressed the basic ideas of what was to become shortly the transcendentalist philosophy· a faith in natural goodness, a dependence upon the intuitive "reason," and an implied belief in the ability of man to rule himself by divine guidance and to progress toward a higher and better state

But when Bancroft spoke in Williamstown, there were as yet no transcendentalists. Emerson, who was to become the leader of the movement, was simply a retired Unitarian minister living and writing in Concord; his essay, *Nature,* the seed from which the philosophy grew in Massachusetts, was not to appear for another year Emerson had read Coleridge, Swedenborg, Plato, and a smattering of German philosophy, his ideas were forming in 1835 Bancroft, saturated in idealistic and transcendental philosophy since 1817, had studied with Schleiermacher, had read Kant, Novalis, Fichte, Jacobi, Schelling, Hegel, and the other Teutonic romantic thinkers who first gave the system its shape What Emerson, Ripley, Thoreau, Dwight, Clarke, Osgood, Brownson, and the other New Englanders knew later at secondhand, Bancroft knew fifteen years earlier, he had become acquainted with the essentials of New England transcendentalism before they had left the shores of Europe to take on an American coloring.

It was not surprising, then, that when Bancroft turned to the writing of history as a career, he wrote from the viewpoint of one who had been nurtured among transcendental influences, one whose mind had matured in those electrifying decades when the century-old questions of humanity's fate were being settled once and for all in New England, in the years when the very stones in the street cried out progress and hope The guiding principles beneath his historical writing lay in his conviction that history was but the record of a divine plan manifested in the past, and that the divine plan proved that mankind was intended by God to

progress toward a future state wherein principles of truth, justice, beauty, and morality — perceived intuitively through the Reason — might guide and raise it. Emerson found his proof in the voiceless intimations of his soul. Bancroft found his in the study of the American past — a record of events which, in their steady march from tyranny toward liberty, from heterogeneity to homogeneity, from scattered colonies to federated republic, illustrated in a single sweep the inevitability of man's progress and the unity of humanity. On this transcendental theory of history Bancroft based his first volume, and no line of his later work deviated from the pattern he laid down in 1834 and 1835.

Bound in brown, with the motto "Westward the star of empire takes its way" imprinted on the cover (although Everett pointed out that Berkeley's quotation spoke of "the *course* of empire"), the 1834 volume found an enthusiastic reception. Little, Brown and Company of Boston published it, although Bancroft, after the custom of the day, paid for the plates, which he owned to the day of his death. William Hickling Prescott wrote: "I have read your history with great pleasure, interest, and instruction. . . . In your first volume you have given us a pledge of an enduring, impartial, readable history — such as we greatly need" Everett read it in twenty-four hours, stopping only for sleep and church, and pronounced it "a work which will last while the memory of America lasts, and which will take its place instantly among the classics of our language." The rest of New England and most of Europe echoed him, and Arnold Heeren wrote from Germany to call it "truly inspired history" Within a year Bancroft's book had found its way into nearly a third of the homes of New England, and the author's name was well on the way to becoming a household word. Bancroft's sister Lucretia said that a man asked her if her brother were not crazy, for he told the truth in history; the most amazing thing about the volume, so many thought, was its objectivity in the treatment of men and issues.

The book had its strengths and its weaknesses Its style was extravagant and often florid, and its generalizations occasionally vaguely founded, but it was buttressed by tremendous scholarship and a great many sources. Most of all, it said with sincere conviction what the American people had been saying and thinking of themselves for a generation — that theirs was a God-directed nation, a divinely-inspired state destined to bring safely into the

world as an example to mankind a government found in freedom and grounded in liberty, a nation built on a belief in the worth and dignity of the common man The history of America, as it took shape on Bancroft's pages, was but an illustration of the steady march of humanity toward a perfect state; it proved that the United States carried out one phase of a divinely-ordered plan It was history written in the mood and temper of an optimistic, romantic, golden day, history that caught and expressed perfectly the spirit of the times

Some critics felt that the florid style detracted from the effect of the volume, and it was true that the book was filled with the conscious elegance and emotional vagueness against which Sparks had warned its author some years earlier. John Quincy Adams thought it a "diffuse and declamatory panegyric," though he admitted it showed "transcendent talents and indefatigable industry." Bancroft, in the words of a later critic, wrote the history of America as if it were the history of the kingdom of Heaven. A pomp of expression, something almost liturgical in the flowing sweep of his sentences, pervaded his work and lent it an inflated but not undignified tone. He seemed to feel that the printed page should speak in the manner of the prevailing taste for the "sublime" in platform oratory It took him nearly twenty years to excise the picturesque phrase, the swelling period, and the grandly general image from his prose, and to attain grace, suppleness, and force without sterile monotony. At its most dramatic, his prose merely offended the critics by its verbosity, as in his tribute to the Pilgrims·

Through scenes of gloom and misery, the Pilgrims showed the way to an asylum for those who would go to the wilderness for the purity of religion or the liberty of conscience Accustomed in their native land to no more than a plain country life and the innocent trade of husbandry, they set the example for colonizing New England, and formed the mould for the civil and religious character of its institutions Enduring every hardship themselves, they were the servants of posterity, the benefactors of succeeding generations In the history of the world, many pages are devoted to commemorate the men who have besieged cities, subdued provinces, or overthrown empires In the eye of reason and truth, a colony is a better offering than a victory, the citizens of the United States should rather cherish the memory of those who founded a state on the basis of democratic liberty; the fathers of the country;

the men who, as they first trod the soil of the New World, scattered seminal principles of republican freedom and national independence They enjoyed, in anticipation, the thought of their extending influence, and the fame which their grateful successors would award to their virtues. "Out of small beginnings," said Bradford, "great things have been produced, and, as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone to many, yea, in some sort to our whole nation" "Let it not be grievous to you" — such was the consolation offered from England to the pilgrims in the season of their greatest sufferings — "let it not be grievous to you, that you have been instruments to break the ice for others The honor shall be yours to the world's end."

Yet on occasion he could write simply and pungently, gaining his emphasis by understatement. "If America had no English towns, it soon had English graves," he said of the ill-fated attempt to colonize Virginia, and his terse epitaph for Sebastian Cabot was equally effective: "He gave England a continent, and no one knows his burial place."

To some readers it seemed that the author allowed his politics to color his work, that traces of Democratic prejudice showed through the ornate prose. Brother-in-law "Honest John" Davis, now Whig governor of Massachusetts, warned the historian: "Let me entreat you not to let any of the partisan creep into the work. Do not imbue it with any present feeling or sentiment which may give impulse to your mind." Ticknor, at Harvard, was convinced that Bancroft had political preferment in mind and that the *History* was biased to that end· "You are not made by your talents or your affectations, by your temperament or your pursuits, to be either the leader or the tool of demagogues." But Bancroft was temperamentally unable to avoid allowing his sympathy with the cause of liberty and democracy to tinge his writing. Throughout colonial history he could not help pointing out the steady progress of the common man toward freedom and self-government, and in every significant event he found deeper meanings. In Bacon's rebellion, in resistance to early British attempts to "tyrannize," in abortive colonial movements toward self-determination, he saw the germ of the future republic and hailed its advent.

There was another minor aspect of the *History* that was significant in the light of events on the political front in 1834 Throughout the volume the author, from an objective and historical point

of view, attacked all systems of servitude practised in the early days, and, true to his democratic bias, he spared no opportunity to point out that the institution of slavery had never deserved a place in the development of America. An entire chapter was given over to the history of slavery and the slave trade, tracing its evil effects upon ancient nations and upon the growing colonies. To Sir John Hawkins Bancroft granted the "odious distinction" of transporting and selling the first Negro slaves, he flatly stated that slavery was forced upon the unwilling colonies by British commercial interests, and that it was maintained, despite colonial opposition, by George III. Slavery, he wrote, was an anomaly in a democratic nation, it was never supported by the colonies themselves as part of their developing society, and it flourished, by virtue of British coercion, simply as an excrescence upon the colonial economy.

Three years earlier, in his review of Boeckh, Bancroft had made a passing reference to slavery, but during the time that had elapsed the abolition issue had grown, snowball fashion, into something more than another reform movement. The New England Antislavery Society and the American Antislavery Society had been formed; tracts, lectures, and other forms of propaganda had spread the issue through New York, to Pennslyvania, to the Western Reserve of Ohio, to Illinois and Kentucky Abolition was fast becoming a political as well as a moral issue; Thad Stevens in Pennsylvania thought that if Anti-Masonry failed, the Anti-Masonic party might well adopt abolition as its chief plank, and Garrison suggested the formation of a National Christian Antislavery party. That there were antislavery men among the Whigs, Workingmen, Democrats, and Anti-Masons in Massachusetts Bancroft knew — there were perhaps four hundred local chapters of the American Antislavery Society in the state. The opportunity thus presented to a man in search of a constituency was fairly clear; he had connections already with the Workingmen and Anti-Masons, and a public statement on the slavery issue might do him a world of good, if it were not too definite a commitment, lest he be labelled a radical abolitionist. A few week[illegible]
croft was invited to appear befor[illegible]
ton, a half-political, half-literary [illegible]
"The Influence of Slavery upo[illegible]
Rome." The decline of Rome, in his view, was due chiefly to

slavery; the Romans had ruined themselves before a barbarian had crossed the Alps Slavery destroyed any political system that tolerated it. It created political instability, it led to revolutions, it resulted in the creation of an immoral and socially despicable class, it caused economic disintegration. He did not mention the United States by name, but the parallel he drew was clear. He had the address printed in a thirty-page pamphlet at his own expense and successfully submitted it to the *North American Review*, but for political reasons that soon became evident it was his last public utterance on the slavery question for twenty years

Many readers felt that the *History* "voted for Jackson," and the Jackson men in Boston and Washington noted the fact. Henshaw and Morton recalled the name of Bancroft, and so did Martin Van Buren. "Little Van," in fact, received from the author a complimentary copy of the volume and a letter outlining the attacks made on the author for his supposed Democratic partisanship "This has been, and ever will be," Van Buren replied in his letter of thanks, "the fate of every sincere friend of liberal principles." Certainly the parties opposed to the New England Whigs needed a scholarly politician to cope with Webster, Everett, Choate, and the others, and Morton and Henshaw recognized the potential value of such a man to their party By 1834 these two leaders had seen the light, and when Henshaw suggested to the Anti-Masonic group that they "unite against a common enemy," the clever and somewhat unscrupulous Hallett, who knew as well as they the advantages of coalition, was ready to listen. All that was needed was a man to serve as go-between, and in September of 1834 C. G Greene, a lieutenant of Henshaw's, invited Bancroft to attend the state Democratic convention at Worcester. Four days later J. B. Eldredge sounded him out on the matter of the Bank, telling him that the Democratic party leaders had long been interested in his career, and that they were now of the opinion that "you have for some time disapproved the course of the aristocracy in New England." Hallett wrote that Alexander Everett, who had Democratic leanings and who was being considered as a possibility, "lacked what all educated men, but you, lack, moral courage," that men of his stamp were sorely needed in politics—a tacit invitation to join the ranks The Democratic party needed a liaison man to serve between the Jackson men, the Workingmen, and the Anti-Masons. Bancroft, a popular and well-known public figure,

was much more acceptable to all three than either Morton or Henshaw, both bankers and city men and therefore subject to suspicion.

As if to provide further proof for the party leaders of his political desirability, Bancroft attracted Democratic attention by obtaining the Anti-Masonic nomination in the 1834 elections as candidate for the General Court. He attended the Anti-Masonic convention in Springfield and embarked on a series of maneuvers designed to demonstrate that he was a valuable Democratic recruit, possessed of influence among the Anti-Masons. On the first day of the meeting he came to Seth Flagg, chairman of the convention, with an affidavit to sign He had been accused of loitering near Warriner's tavern, peering through the windows at the assembled delegates, and he wished Flagg's testimony to the effect that he had in no way bothered the meeting Flagg obligingly signed the paper, and with it a set of resolutions, drawn up by Bancroft himself, praising his "fearlessness, independence, and republican spirit." At Hallett's invitation the following day he attended the meeting, heard the laudatory resolutions read and approved, and presented a third paper for the chairman's signature, this time an affidavit stating that Bancroft had been recommended as a candidate and nominated. Flagg, no doubt somewhat bewildered by this time, accommodatingly signed, explaining later that he understood the document to be only for Bancroft's private use It is debatable whether or not Bancroft was actually nominated — Flagg claimed that although such a motion had been presented, it had been tabled — but when the convention dismissed, Bancroft possessed written proof of the fact that he was an Anti-Masonic candidate in the elections The Democrats could not fail to notice him, and their opinion of him must have risen accordingly Shortly afterwards, when John Davis and the Whigs (who still believed that Bancroft could be won to the conservatives) suggested that he join them, he declined, strongly phrasing his refusal in a public letter which aroused, as he had no doubt intended that it should, widespread comment. Then when the Workingmen offered him a nomination, he refused in favor of the Democratic nominee, "not wishing," he said, "to split the anti-Whig forces."

Putting all the facts together, — that Bancroft evidently had powerful connections with the Whig, Anti-Masonic, and Workingmen's groups — and realizing that his books had won him

with the Boston elite and had placed him in a position perhaps to attract even a few dissatisfied Whigs, Morton and Henshaw invited him into their party His duty was to persuade both Anti-Masons and Workingmen to combine with the Democrats against the entrenched Whigs who had nominated John Davis for governor.

Bancroft set to work immediately, stumping the western towns in favor of the ubiquitous Morton, the Democratic candidate for governor, working with Hallett and with Samuel Allen of the Workingmen in an attempt to collect the anti-Whig vote in the Judge's behalf. He was relatively successful. Hallett's Anti-Masons gave Morton an increase of 3000 votes at the polls, but a rebellious rump convention of Workingmen refused to merge their identity in the larger party, put up their own candidate, and left the coalition incomplete. Bancroft was defeated in his own candidacy, causing the Boston *Courier* to editorialize·

We rejoice that Mr Bancroft was defeated, though we are sorry that he is obliged to suffer the mortification that follows it. We hope that he has learned a useful and salutary lesson, and that he will return from the wilderness of politics into which he has plunged so inconsiderately, to the more attractive garden of literature.

Bancroft neither agreed nor cared. The margin of his defeat had not been humiliating — he polled 2,878 votes to the Whig candidate's 3,958 — but the point was that he had beaten Warner, the Democratic nominee, by more than 400 votes, a fact that the Democratic leaders could not fail to appreciate. He told Edward Everett after the elections "It will be some years before a popular party can become powerful in this state. But it will rise, and within six years it will culminate." He might have added that he intended to rise with it

From 1834 on, Bancroft became an increasingly important figure in the Democratic party councils "I am radically a republican in feeling and in principle," he wrote Everett in November of that year. "I am most radical, and to the heart's core." He could say things, Edward E. Hale thought, as no other man could say them, and he was as a result in great demand as a rally speaker, traveling through Massachusetts and to Vermont and New York to make his speeches in the Democratic cause. At about this time he began keeping a notebook for the purpose of jotting down, as

they came to him, random thoughts which might be inserted into his political speeches or which might serve as the theme of an entire oration. Hastily written and fragmentary, these notes provide excellent examples of Bancroft's political logic, and serve to indicate the drift of dozens of otherwise unrecorded platform appeals throughout the villages of Massachusetts. He was learning his political lessons fast and well.

To assert the rights of labor is the mission of the age Each interest that has won its rights finds its best friend in Democracy

Modes of influencing elections, by confusion of ideas, by personal calumnies, by promise of employ, influence; by inspiring fear, cowing down the people, by promise of some immediate good n b nothing can benefit the farmer or laborer but improvements in the social condition, by buying over the leaders or their surrendering their principles, by surrendering one or two points

Farmers are the true material for a republic, capable of receiving a good impression, an elegant stamp, the true marble, fit to be wrought into the likeness of a God The upright yeomanry is the material, liberty is the soul

Rewards of labor Should have the products of labor He who labors much should have much and the reverse The merchant does not produce he does but exchange Hence the city lives on the labor of the manufacturer and the farmer

The farmers achieved the Revolution aided by mechanics The furtherance of our liberty rests on the mechanics

The people is the sovereign. The man of letters is his counsellor. That is, in this country the educated men are the privy council to the sovereign

Bancroft's frequent appearances soon caused the politicians to take note of him, men such as Woodbury of New Hampshire, William Marcy, Seward, and Thurlow Weed in New York. Anti-Masonry was dying in politics, and the leaders knew it, for the party had depended upon emotionalism and prejudice for its [illegible]

of Morton and Henshaw, if they could promise him and his supporters something in return. Henshaw, as Collector of the Port of Boston with some $75,000 in salaried positions at his disposal as

well as the right to make appointments of lighthouse keepers, agreed to cooperate. The difficult problem was to persuade the unruly Workingmen to join the organization. Morton, a banker and a judge, could hardly be expected to make successful overtures to the artisans and mechanics, and neither could Henshaw, a merchant-banker, be relied upon to exert any moving appeal. A man was needed to appeal to the small but important labor party, and the choice fell upon Bancroft, whose reputation as a scholar and as a speaker provided exactly the necessary combination.

In the elections of 1835 Bancroft did yeoman labor, drumming up the Workingman vote, and although Morton lost again to Edward Everett of the Whigs, he polled thirty-nine per cent of the vote, a gain of some seven thousand which came primarily from the Anti-Masonic and Workingmen's parties. Bancroft, speaking to the "Workies" from every available platform, praised the Democrats and damned the Whigs with all the energy he possessed. The Whigs liked "men and their possessions," he said; the Democrats liked "naked humanity." The Whigs liked "separate interests," the Democrats "equal rights." A Washington's birthday speech at Greenfield provided him an opportunity to point out, as he was eminently capable of doing, the historical parallels between the Tories of Washington's day and the Whigs of his own. The Democratic crusade, he proclaimed, was as sacred as the Revolutionary cause itself, the same liberties were at stake, the same evil opponents faced by the Sons of Liberty. He interpreted the Democratic platform as radical and anti-property, which it clearly was not, trying to erase as well as he could the laborer's innate suspicion of the city bankers who controlled the party. Morton wrote a letter for Bancroft's campaign use, affirming that he "never owned a *dollar's* worth of stock in any corporation in Boston" — a statement whose truth depended wholly upon its interpretation — and armed with it, the historian explained to the Workingmen the principles of the party upon which, he felt sure, they would all agree. His work was done energetically and well, so much so that the Whig *Atlas* commented wryly:

The "Workingmen," as they style themselves, better known however in that city, as the "idle men," who adjourn from the halls of infidelity and atheism; from the dram shops and the dram cellars, to their vari-

ous places of meeting, to devise some scheme by which they may live on the earnings of the industrious men — are loud in the praise of their new leader and co-worker, Mr Bancroft.

Until the 1835 elections, Bancroft's chief affiliations had been nominally with the Anti-Masonic and Workingmen's parties, although his duty seemed to lie in wrecking them internally to consolidate support for the Democrats. In 1836 he was formally accepted into the Democratic party, and the rest of his political career in the state was bound up with its fate. His entrance into the party came at a propitious time, for the disagreement between Henshaw and Morton, an argument beginning some years earlier, was rapidly approaching a crisis The two men had, personally and politically, little in common, but for purposes of political expediency a coalition of Henshaw's urban Democrats and Morton's farmers had been necessary. Henshaw's innate conservatism did not appeal to Morton, nor Morton's idealism and theoretical democracy to Henshaw; but since the latter, by virtue of his Collector's post, controlled the party patronage, a complete break between them was manifestly impossible. With Bancroft, Morton had more in common, for both were literary men, scholars, and liberals. With Bancroft's rural and urban support from the voters becoming each month more apparent, a coolness arose between the Judge and Henshaw.

Furthermore, Bancroft's tireless speechmaking had taken him out among the voters in a fashion Henshaw could never hope to equal, and his name was more often in the public print than that of any other party man His 1836 Fourth of July oration at Springfield attracted statewide attention for its bitter attack on Whiggery, and for its rather extreme definition of Democracy as simply "practical Christianity." He took great pains to make certain that all Massachusetts heard him denounce the Whigs as "the party of Mammon," printing the oration in pamphlet form at his own expense and calling upon his personal and political friends for assistance in its distribution On August 9, for example, he wrote Samuel Drake of Cornhill "I have been writing an oration. Here are seventy-five copies. Sell them to the Democrats and the good people of Boston, twelve and a half cents apiece, one dollar a dozen. See if you cannot dispose of two or three hundred." Governor Marcy of New York read it and sent his compliments, as well as an invita-

tion to write his Thanksgiving proclamation in the same vein. When he had recently visited Kinderhook, Marcy reported, he had found Martin Van Buren reading portions of the oration aloud to a group of visiting Southerners. Van Buren, to be elected in four months, remarked, Bancroft heard, that as far as he was concerned, "Bancroft is first in Massachusetts." In fact, nearly everyone except his family was convinced of that fact; as his sister Lucretia remarked: "There is but one thing which prevents me from siding with you in politics, and that is the companions you are compelled to mix with."

Bancroft mixed with them, however, very successfully, for in less than ninety days the orator was nominated for a seat in Congress by his party, and, although he lost, he knew that he was now definitely a power in the Democratic organization. Edward Everett went into office as governor on the Whig ticket, but by no landslide—Morton polled forty-six per cent of the vote, a gain of 11,000 votes, and the prospects were the brightest they had ever been in the history of the Democratic party in Massachusetts. "It is now for the yeomanry and the mechanics to march at the head of civilization," Bancroft told Orestes Brownson. "The day for the multitude has now arrived."

The following year was a busy one for Bancroft, for since the publication of the first volume of the *History* he had been working on the second. "My employment, morning and evening," he told Everett in the fall of 1834, "is in preparing the second volume. The topics are various, grand in their character, and capable of being arranged in an interesting narrative." In 1835 he wrote: "I jog on in my second volume, adding a little every day." In 1837 it appeared, a brilliant work covering the years 1660 to 1689 and as competent and authoritative as its predecessor. Ralph Waldo Emerson thought it "a pleasant book," but disliked "the insertion of a boyish hurrah, every now and then. . . ." Prescott wrote from Pepperell to tell the author:

I have run through your second volume with much pleasure. I had some misgivings that the success of your first, and still more that your political hobbyism, might have made you, if not careless, at least less elaborate But I see no symptoms of it. . . . Why do you coquet with such a troublesome termagant as politics, when the glorious Muse of History opens her arms to receive you?

James Grahame, the Scots historian of America, read the two volumes together and "cordially and gladly acknowledged [*them*] to be far superior to my own." Carlyle read the volumes in London, and added his praise, tempered by a warning to the author that "all things have light *and* shadow," a gentle criticism of its ardently democratic tone.

The success of the book was overcast by tragedy, however, for a month before it appeared Sarah Bancroft died after giving birth to a son George, the second son and the third child of their union. Their marriage had been a happy one, despite occasional friction with the Dwights over Bancroft's political activity, and the bereaved husband felt deeply the loss of his quiet, pleasant wife. Her even nature had perhaps been primarily responsible for Bancroft's friendly relations with her family over the period of years of his business apprenticeship, for her husband was short of temper and often obstinate, and his ideas were clearly not those of the Dwights. Possessed of a keen and intelligent mind in her own right, she had been, he told his sister, a strong staff to him Her death severed his last connection with the Dwights and business; there was no reason now for delaying any longer his political ambitions. Louisa, four years old, John Chandler, two, and the infant George were moved to the home of their Aunt Mary Bancroft, their father's sister, and the historian lived alone in Springfield.

As Bancroft's power as a politician grew, the letters from office-seekers poured in, and in April there came one that attracted his attention in more than ordinary fashion. Horatio Bridge, of Augusta, Maine, wrote that a young man named Nathaniel Hawthorne needed assistance The name was faintly familiar; Bancroft remembered it attached to some moody, imaginative pieces in Goodrich's annual, *The Token* — writing that showed promise. He sent a letter of recommendation to Washington in Hawthorne's behalf, and soon Elizabeth Peabody of the famous Boston sisters came to call and to add her voice to that of Bridge. Bancroft kept Hawthorne in mind as a deserving author who should have a job when one was available, and in a short time he found himself able to reward not only Hawthorne but many of his own friends.

In politics the year 1837 brought disappointment to Bancroft and disaster to his party. As one by one the banks of the cities closed their doors in the panic of the early months of the year, the Whigs pointed out the "radicalism" of their opposition and laid the re-

sponsibility for the financial upheaval directly upon the Democrats and their attitude toward the United States Bank, with the result that their organization began to weaken seriously. "We are now in a crisis," Morton told Bancroft, "which requires all our wisdom and all our energy. . . . Can we maintain our ground? If so, when the panic is over, we can advance." The Judge's fears were well founded, for the financial depression was an effective Whig issue, one which widened the breach between Morton and Henshaw and brought into the open the internal dissension in the party. The crisis brought Morton to the definite conclusion that his one-time co-worker must go Having decided to force Henshaw from the party, he chose Bancroft as the logical successor. Morton called a huge mass meeting of the rural Democrats, Anti-Masons, and Workingmen to meet at Bunker Hill for a discussion of ways and means to turn aside the attacks of the Whigs over the Bank issue, a meeting to which David Henshaw, for years a leader of the party, remained pointedly uninvited. The meeting put Morton up once more for the governorship, although the nominee admitted that his frequent defeats were causing embarrassment to himself and to the party, and Benjamin Hallett, now avowedly a Democrat, threw his weight toward Morton and Bancroft, leaving Henshaw without a place in his own machine. Morton lost the governorship to Edward Everett with less than thirty-nine per cent of the vote, a decided drop over the previous high of forty-six per cent. In the heat of the campaign few of the politicians took up an issue injected into the struggle by Hallett, the issue of slavery — Morton, said Hallett, was an antislavery man, while Everett was against emancipation. The furore over the banks overshadowed the other issues in 1837, and no one could know that the question of abolition was to be the rock upon which the party would eventually split. Furthermore, both the Democrat and the Whig leaders were wary of the issue; it was a hot one, and no one could predict the extent of its political usefulness in 1837. There were, without a doubt, various shades of opinion on slavery in both major parties in the late thirties, some radical abolitionists, some gradual emancipationists, and not a few who, though unwilling to stir up a hornet's nest, w simply unsympathetic toward the institution. After Hallett Anti-Masons had once toyed with the idea of an antislavery in their platform) had broken the ground, a Quaker the Workingmen, John Greenleaf Whittier, sugges

that he attempt to put the Democrats on record as an antislavery party. Bancroft, who had prudently kept quiet on the matter of slavery since his 1834 volume of the *History,* saw that such a move was manifestly impossible. The Democrats could not declare themselves on the issue without perhaps alienating more voters than they might gain; the antislavery vote was an unknown quantity in Massachusetts.

The break between Morton and Henshaw, intensified by the disappointing campaign of 1837, became complete as soon as the results of the election were in. Henshaw's power in the party rested solely upon his control of patronage through the Collectorship, an appointive position responsible directly to the President. Morton knew that if Henshaw's appointment for the year 1838 were not confirmed, the banker would be shorn of his power. Accordingly, to complete his plans for the elimination of Henshaw from the party, the Judge began in the summer of 1837 to correspond with the party leaders in the national capital concerning Henshaw's re- [illegible]

other Boston merchant, met with Morton's disapproval, since he wished to curry favor with the rural Democrats and not with the seaboard group. Only the name of George Bancroft, a comparative newcomer to the party but a man whose name already was familiar to most of New England, remained on the eligible list, and Morton communicated with the historian concerning his appointment.

Bancroft was at first uncertain of the wisdom of accepting the post, for it meant that he would for the time being become avowedly a politician rather than a scholar. In November he asked J. G. Harris, a young newspaperman of New Bedford who had previously asked him for a place in the party organization, to make an undercover survey of the prospects. Harris's report convinced him that acceptance of the customs office would entail both personal and political advantage. The salary amounted to $5,000 yearly, and since the Collector controlled printing contracts totaling in the thousands, more profit might accrue from their judicious distribution. Henshaw, said Harris, was a "shrewd, selfish, strong-minded (but I believe corrupt-hearted) man," who had built up a powerful political machine, controlled from the Collector's desk, a machine which Bancroft stood to inherit practically intact. The key to

machine lay in the Collector's control of customhouse and other positions. As the party was organized, the central state committee appointed a chairman for each county, who chose a county committee, which in turn selected a town chairman who chose a town committee. Henshaw, perceiving that the power lay in the hands of the county chairmen, had wisely distributed his customs clerkships and postmasterships among them, establishing control over the selection of all sub-chairmen and committees. Every Federal position in the state of Massachusetts passed first through the office of the Collector of Customs, and in addition, Harris discovered, Henshaw had been in the habit of awarding printing contracts to his own paper, *The Statesman*, at advantageous prices. The actual political energy, outside of patronage, had emanated from the rooms of J. K. Simpson's Commonwealth Bank, which Jackson had designated a government repository after the destruction of the United States Bank From there Simpson, upon receipt of orders from Henshaw's customhouse, did the actual party work, sending out ward-men to talk to the voters, conferring with the outstate party leaders, and seeing that the machinery moved smoothly. It was a good arrangement, and Bancroft agreed with Harris that Morton's offer was opportune. In January, 1838, it was formally announced that George Bancroft of Springfield was the new Collector of the Port of Boston and new leader of the Democratic party in Massachusetts. It had taken him less than five years to rise from nowhere to virtual control of a major political party in an important state.

As soon as Bancroft took office he moved from Springfield to Boston, and, taking a page from Henshaw's book, started a newspaper, *The Bay State Democrat,* calling Harris from New Bedford to serve as its editor. To replace Simpson's bank as the meeting place for party workers he opened a "reading-room" in the paper's offices, where visiting Democrats from city and country could set up headquarters and where party meetings might be held. His problem as he took over the position was a large one, but not insoluble: he must consolidate by means of patronage the rural and urban Democrats; he must unite under the party banner by the same method all possible Anti-Masonic and Workingmen votes, he must eliminate every trace of the Henshaw machine and substitute his own; and he must fight with every weapon and at every moment the incumbent Whigs. He had Washington behind him —



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN HALLETT



JUDGE MARCUS MORTON

Frank Blair, Van Buren's lieutenant and editor of the paper Emerson called "that foolish *Globe*," wrote from the capital to say that the President "looked on the country party . . . as our best hope." The Anti-Masons, hinted Hallett, could be won, smelling patronage, he wrote on January 6 to tell Bancroft "We will all rally round you!" Van Buren himself, said Hallett, had praised Bancroft; furthermore, Hallett's newspaper, *The Advocate*, could use some government printing contracts, and if the office of District Attorney "happened" to become vacant, could not Hallett be considered for it? Samuel Allen of the Workingmen wrote from Northfield to remind his friend not to forget the farmers and mechanics when he was passing out jobs Charles Sumner wrote to say that "it was known that M Cousin, the Moral Philosopher of France, thinks very highly of Mr Brownson of this city," and that he knew M. Cousin "would be gratified to hear of his being in some office where he could easily earn a competent income " William Hickling Prescott, one of the few who had nothing to gain, told his brother historian that he had persuaded Hale, editor of the Boston *Advertiser*, not to attack him in its columns. (*Ferdinand and Isabella*, just off the presses, was doing well in sales, and Bancroft, reviewing it in the *Democratic Review* a few months later, praised it highly) Of course the letters of congratulation poured in, some sincere, some clearly self-seeking Many of Henshaw's old ward-men, Parmenter, Osgood, Thomas, and others, offered their allegiance to the new party boss

Bancroft, snowed under by correspondence during the early months of 1838, knew that his main problem was to build a machine before the fall elections, and fell to his job at once, coldly unconscious of prior commitments and impervious to the over-eager solicitations of job seekers. Harris told him that Hallett's power in the dying Anti-Masonic party was waning, therefore Hallett got no printing contracts Further, said Harris, the Workingmen's party was breaking up, and the important men would cleave to Bancroft whether they received rewards or not; therefore the positions in the customhouse went only to those Anti-Masons and Democrats who were, in Harris' opinion, "honest wellwishers to Democracy." But Henshaw did all that he could to embarrass his successor He refused to support either Bancroft's paper or his reading-room, and Harris reported that he had found "street corner talkers" from Henshaw's bank rooms all over Boston, whisper-

ing against the historian. The disgruntled banker founded another paper, appropriately named *The Thorn,* for the sole purpose of fighting *The Bay State Democrat,* and he might have done a great deal of damage had not his bank failed miserably in the early portion of the year. It was rumored that Henshaw had been careless with customhouse funds on deposit, that he had paid off fishermen's bounties in worthless notes, that he speculated unwisely and not wholly honestly in a real estate venture on South Boston's mudflats. Perhaps a negligent banker in many respects, the unfortunate Henshaw was not dishonest, but the failure of his bank marked the end of his power as a politician. The voters were suspicious, and Hallett wrote that, "Even if he is innocent the proofs are too strong. You may rely on it, they have produced an entire revulsion of feeling. . . ." By spring Henshaw was no longer a menace to Bancroft and Morton, and control of the Democratic party in Massachusetts lay entirely in their hands.

Bancroft's first year of Boston residence moved smoothly into accustomed grooves. At the customhouse he found the work comparatively easy, with plenty of time available for political activity and reading. Henshaw, he discovered, had awarded some sixty thousand dollars yearly in printing contracts to his own paper. These were rapidly redistributed, with some plums saved for *The Bay State Democrat* Henshaw too had collected hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of bonds — collections for duties were often paid for by importers' bonds rather than cash — and discipline among the clerks he had allowed to become dangerously lax. Bancroft set up higher standards for his employees, and set about collecting back bonds, mostly thought worthless, netting the government a great deal of previously uncollected revenue.

With the Customs office functioning smoothly and party affairs under control, he continued work on the third volume of the *History* and wrote occasional articles for the journals, occupying himself with his books and papers To the April number of the *North American* he contributed an article on the American historians, but J. G. Palfrey, the editor, removed a flattering reference to Andrew Jackson from the manuscript and the battle with the magazine began. Bancroft ordered the sentence inserted, else he would withdraw the article. Palfrey replied that the edition was already half-printed, apologized, and promised to rectify the omission in the rest of the issue. Mollified for the moment, the historian was even

more angry to find that inserted in the article was a paragraph of commendation of his own work, Palfrey's attempt to soothe his feelings. Certain that he would be charged with self-puffery, Bancroft wrote hotly to Palfrey, demanding an immediate accounting and beginning an acrimonious correspondence that ended with Bancroft's letters being returned unopened. Prescott and Sparks advised the angry author to treat the matter lightly, but he refused to do so He hired space in the Boston *Post* to reprint some of the correspondence and to disclaim responsibility for the disputed passage. Then he dropped the matter, having made more enemies than the occasion demanded but having proved his integrity to his own satisfaction.

The Palfrey affair set the keynote for his first year in Boston. Although friendly with Boston society and conditionally accepted by it, he felt a trifle uncertain of himself, for he knew that his party affiliations were anathema to the old Whig aristocracy. Democrats were simply not in good repute. Bronson Alcott, when he heard the news of Bancroft's accession to the political leadership of the party of Jackson and Van Buren, solemnly crossed his name from his list of "Living Men, the free men and the brave, by whom great principles are honored." Many of the historian's friends expressed their disappointment at his choice of a profession At one time he said to a Boston woman of old acquaintance: "I did not find you at home when I called" "No," she replied, "and you never will." Much of Boston's upper crust felt that any politics but Whig was sordid, and that in his rise to power Bancroft had, in some way, alienated himself from his own class But Bancroft never bothered to defend himself, for he was certain of his course and convinced of the integrity of his principles. "The convictions from which I act," he wrote

> seem to me so in harmony with the whole tendency of the civilized world, that they may be defended without passion and without anxiety . . . The Democratic principle is the true American principle; it is as safe as our independence

It was not wholly his principles, however, that Boston viewed askance, for there were plenty of abstract liberals among its first citizens. "Almost to a man," said George Ripley, "those who show any marks of genius or intellectual enterprise are philosophical democrats." — Gentle Dr. Channing leaned toward the demc

course, Theodore Parker sent the message from his pulpit, Emerson mulled it over in his study. But Ripley's statement indicated the reason for Boston's disapproval of the historian. These men were "philosophical democrats," intellectuals who talked liberalism in libraries, studies, and from lyceum platforms, who wrote meditative discussions in the respectable journals, but Bancroft was both a "philosophical" and a practical Democrat, with the capital letter, too active, too energetic, a party politician who made his beliefs too concrete and public to be quite respectable.

However, on August 16 of 1838, Bancroft reinstated himself somewhat in the eyes of the city's aristocracy by marrying, after a brief courtship, Mrs Elizabeth Davis Bliss, sister of John Davis (husband of Bancroft's sister Eliza), widow of a junior partner in Daniel Webster's law firm, and the mother of two small sons, William and Alexander Bliss The new Mrs. Bancroft, witty, handsome, good-natured, and well liked, did much to change her husband's attitude toward the city he felt had snubbed him. With their five children (Louisa, John Chandler, and George Bancroft, and the two Bliss boys) they set up their home in Winthrop Place, put the boys in Boston Latin school and Louisa in a girls' school, and began to move easily and naturally into the brilliant society of Boston, with the Emersons, the Fullers, the Alcotts, the Ripleys, and the rest But one evening, not long after her marriage, Mrs Bancroft took her visiting list and sat down to read over the names of those acquaintances she had "lost" socially through her marriage, concluding with a sigh that many of the Beacon Street aristocracy were among the number.

At the same time it was apparent that the one-time Exeter charity scholar was well on the way toward becoming a wealthy man. His account books showed that in January of 1839 his possessions totaled on paper about $75,000, nearly two thirds of it in six per cent stocks of Cleveland, Buffalo, St. Louis, and Cincinnati banks, the result of judicious investments made under the tutelage of the Dwights. *The Bay State Democrat* operated at a substantial profit, and even the customhouse contributed, as one entry during 1840, "Weighers and Gaugers, $2000," attested. A venture in Michigan and Ohio lands in 1841 made $3000 profit, and his wife's stocks and real estate brought in amounts which varied between $130 and $250 a month. Little, Brown and Company, his publishers, sent him royalty checks from the sale of his *History* ranging from $200

to $500 a month. He received fifty cents a volume on sales of the American edition, thirty-three cents for the French, and sixteen cents for the British. In 1841 he received a total of $4250 in royalties. Some of his income he immediately used to acquire material for future volumes, his expenditures for his library and collections averaging about $150 a month for ten years — he paid $400 for the papers of Samuel Adams alone in October of 1841, and at the end of that year figured that his library represented an investment of at least $9000

The elections of 1838 found the reliable Morton once more a candidate for governor against Edward Everett, the Whig choice. As usual, he lost, but the reorganized party gave him forty-four per cent of the votes cast, a tribute to the new Collector's skill at consolidating Anti-Masons, Workingmen, and Democrats The Whig *Atlas* remarked sarcastically· "Mr Bancroft's administration does not appear to add any additional strength to the party. We have always understood he was to revolutionize Boston." But Bancroft bided his time. His party had ridden out the storm of 1837, and needed but seven per cent more of the vote to gain power All he needed was an issue to attract the missing seven per cent, and almost immediately the Whig governor provided him one ready-made.

Edward Everett signed a bill, brought up through prohibitionist pressure, which made the sale of liquor in less than fifteen gallon lots illegal, and Bancroft was quick to perceive the opportunity Everett's foolish act gave him What laborer could afford to buy his daily tot fifteen gallons at a time? Did the Whigs mean to restrict the pleasures of rum wholly to the moneyed class? In vain the Whigs might protest that prohibition was not a plank in their platform, for Everett's signature gave the bill an unmistakably Whig character, and the laboring classes saw it as Whig and nothing else. The election of 1839 turned primarly upon the liquor law, and with orders from Bancroft to whip up the issue, the Democratic newspapers made the most of it. A good many unpleasant words passed, and Everett, whom Bancroft had called "a godlike genius" in 1824, began returning the younger man's personal letters to him unopened and cutting him dead on the Boston streets. When the votes were counted Morton was in the governor's chair by a single, solitary vote Somebody in Springfield, it was claimed, had set the town clock ten minutes ahead, closing the polls at twenty minutes past four instead of four-thirty, and losing several Whig votes for

Everett. Senator Niles of Connecticut wrote that "the raw recruits of democracy proved more than a match for the veteran legions of federalism." Woodbury of New Hampshire believed it was "mind, mind, mind — truth, truth, truth, which had conquered." There were many fine words spoken about the startling success of the Massachusetts Democrats, but Bancroft knew very well that his party had won because the Boston mechanic liked a drink at the corner saloon and would not have it taken away from him.

The following year was a pleasant one for George Bancroft and his wife. A daughter, Susan Jackson, was born to them on May 30, and the father wrote Jane Gherardi that with his own boys, his stepsons, and the baby girl, he "felt like a patriarch, surrounded by a large and blooming family" Three deaths in the Bancroft family, however, shadowed the year. In April his mother died, leaving Aaron Bancroft failing rapidly in health. George told his sister Jane, living in Louisiana where her husband taught school, that their father was "desperately feeble, during the whole summer gradually wasting He is now very near his disposition." Hardly had the letter reached Jane when she fell ill of yellow fever, dying soon after and leaving a small son, Bancroft Gherardi, with her husband. Of the family of twelve that had filled the old house on Salisbury Street in Worcester, seven were left — Thomas, a farmer near Worcester, Eliza, wife of John Davis, Mary, Susan, Lucretia, Ann, and George.

Although Prescott could never understand "how a man could woo the fair muse of history and the ugly strumpet of faction with one and the same breath," Bancroft found no difficulty in ruling Massachusetts politics with one hand and completing the third volume of his *History* with the other. The demands on his time increased as his social life expanded. Emerson came to dine at his house, and Frothingham, Ripley, and Margaret Fuller Alcott, oft invited, declined — "Is it a meet place for me at the tables of the fashionable, the voluptuous, the opulent?" Shy Hawthorne, safe in Bancroft's customhouse with a salary of $1,200 a year, could not bring himself to come, for he was afraid of literary lions and lionesses. In November of 1839 Margaret Fuller began her "Conversations" at the Peabody house on West Street, and Mrs. Bancroft attended with the other bluestockings, Lydia Child, Mrs. Emerson, Mrs. Theodore Parker, Maria White (engaged to young Lowell), and the three Peabody sisters. Her husband moved into

the circle of the intellectuals, his volumes of history his passport, occasionally dropping into a meeting of the Transcendentalist Club at Ripley's house or meeting with a group of literary men to discuss the latest developments in literature and philosophy. He might talk with Orestes Brownson (who had been rewarded for his political assistance by the stewardship of the Marine Hospital), with the German refugee Carl Follen, with Frederic Hedge, or Emerson, Samuel May, Christopher Cranch, James Freeman Clarke, Samuel Ward, and others of the influential inner group of Boston's intellectual life. It was the sort of society in which he belonged, and into which he fitted. Of Ralph Waldo Emerson he made a particularly close friend, and he mentioned to Theodore Parker that if the Concord philosopher would only join the Democratic ranks, "what a party might he build!" He attended Emerson's lectures on *The Present Age* in December, and in Parker's view, "was in ecstasies — he was rapt beyond vision at the locofocoism of the lecture." Parker suspected, quite unjustly, that Emerson had hopes of obtaining a customhouse post; but Emerson had little interest in parties, saying later in *Politics* that although the Democrats had the better principles, the Whigs had the better men. Bancroft, despite their friendship, was to him simply "a soldier of fortune, who could take any side and defend it" There was talk of founding a journal (later to become *The Dial*) with Emerson, Ripley, Margaret Fuller, and Bancroft as opening contributors, and the salons buzzed with the talk of Ripley's project for a Utopian community at Brook Farm — "a room at the Astor House set aside for the transcendentalists," said Emerson ironically.

In the midst of all this came the third volume of the *History*, treating the years 1689 to 1748, a piece of work fully up to the standards set by the preceding two, and one which helped further to consolidate the author's fame as a scholar; Prescott, in the pages of the *North American*, accorded Bancroft a "place among the great historical writers of the age." Financially prosperous, politically powerful, and accepted socially and intellectually as one of Massachusetts' first citizens, George Bancroft felt that he had arrived

His political power, however, was shortlived, for in 1840 the Whigs nominated brother-in-law John Davis, an astute politician, against Morton, and in the presidential campaign "Tippecanoe" Harrison opposed Van Buren. Bancroft and Morton, forced to

stand or fall with "Little Van," threw their state machine to his support, a mistake, as it turned out, for the stories of Van Buren's gold dinner service in the White House and his Double Extract of Victoria perfume, untrue as they were, did not sit well with either the rural or the urban workers of the Massachusetts Democrats The Democrats campaigned on principles, the Whigs on personalities, and the Whigs had the more effective ammunition.

With the campaign turning on the issue of common man versus aristocrat, of wine versus hard cider, Bancroft's newspaper, supporting Van Buren as a man of the people and the friend of the laborer, found itself in an acutely embarrassing position. To add to the difficulties, Orestes Brownson's *Quarterly Review*, a journal accepted by many as a semi-official party organ of the Democrats, suddenly declared in its pages that the state should pass a law forbidding the hereditary descent of property, a totally unexpected declaration which Bancroft and his party hastened to repudiate. "Brownson has played the deuce with us by his visionary doctrines," one Democrat wrote Levi Woodbury, who sent the letter to Bancroft with the notation, "Everybody is loud in their denunciation of him. Why is he kept there? Why?" The historian was hard pressed to explain the actions of his appointee, explaining that "the Democracy of Massachusetts is no more responsible for Brownson's notions than the Whigs are for Mormonism."

But the Whigs seized the opportunity given them by Brownson to label the Democrats as radical and violent anarchists, and when pressure from the Workingmen forced Morton to declare himself in favor of freedom for labor and a ten-hour day, a great part of Massachusetts nodded its head in agreement; radicalism seemed to be at the helm of the party. *The Bay State Democrat* turned in desperation to plain mudslinging, accusing prominent Whigs of receiving financial support from British "moneycrats" who hoped that their holdings of two and a half million dollars in state securities would "raise twenty per cent with a Whig victory." Was it not true, asked the *Democrat*, that Daniel Webster's trip to London had been financed by an English banking firm?

It was a bi[illegible] to see the hopes for control o [illegible] Log Cabin and Hard Cider [illegible] the Democratic party. Bancroft did his part, stumping the back country like an old campaigner, returning to the farm towns he had not seen since

his days as a political novice. John Quincy Adams recorded in his diary tha
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broken forth in this country to a fearful extent." In Barre, a village not far from Springfield, Bancroft found that the Whigs, anticipating his plans for a rally, had secured a competing speaker, none other than black-browed Daniel Webster himself, and that they had furthermore hired the Fitzwilliam Artillery from New Hampshire to parade, with accompanying blare of band music, past the church in which the Democrats met Yet the historian held his own, and Webster, with all his parade, drew few more spectators.

Nevertheless the desperate Democrats could do little against the name of Harrison, and as long as the state elections pivoted on the national campaign their defeat was certain Bancroft's newspaper went so far as to accuse Davis of outright graft, of buying land for a dollar and a quarter an acre and selling it to the government for eight, an accusation which Davis took with good grace, although family relations were strained for a time But a week before the elections Bancroft reported to Van Buren that he was afraid Massachusetts might go Whig in spite of all his efforts. It did, and with a venegance Morton lost badly, and with him went the power of his party. "We have met a Waterloo defeat," wrote the faithful Judge. "All that now remains is for us to clear the wreck and repair damages "

Repair of the wrecked Massachusetts machine was easier to plan than to execute. The Collectorship would change hands, Bancroft knew, as soon as Harrison took office, and he contemplated resignation before he was ignominiously dismissed. Mr. Bancroft, said the Whig *Atlas* delightedly, needed a rest — had he not worked hard at his office from eleven to two almost daily? It did not take long for Harrison, whom Emerson called appropriately the "Indignation President," to clean house in Boston. Out went Bancroft as Collector of the Port and in went Levi Lincoln, a Whig. Hawthorne lost his job, though Prescott interceded vainly in his behalf with Webster, and he began making arrangements to join the band of dreamers at Ripley's Brook Farm. Everett went to England as Minister to the Court of St. James's, and Rufus Choate to the Senate It was a Whig field day, and the carefully constructed machine of Morton and Bancroft flew to pieces

To make matters worse, David Henshaw refused to stay in his political grave; when Harrison's early death put John Tyler in office, Henshaw, an old Calhoun man, went to Washington to see what Tyler, an old Democrat himself, could do for him. Van Buren might still be the party's deity to Bancroft and Morton, but Henshaw knew that Van Buren's influence was swiftly passing. Throwing in his fortunes with Tyler and the Whigs, he began to gather about him a small following — he had at least hope to offer, while the Van Buren men in Massachusetts had not a single job to give away

Bancroft remained in Boston through the carnage, editing his newspaper and writing history. Mrs Hawthorne once said to her husband, when he left another customhouse, "Oh, then, now you can write your book!" Bancroft was always writing his. In London and Paris his agents were copying notes in the government archives, and letters constantly went out from Winthrop Place to men such as Henry Schoolcraft, asking information on Indians; to Peter Force, the archivist in Washington, seeking copies of colonial documents; to the director of the State Hospital for the Insane searching out information on the madness of George III; to the French consul asking for permission to obtain copies of documents relating to America in French archives Of his agent in London he requested, for use as a frontispiece to Volume III, an engraving of Franklin with the warts on Franklin's face omitted; in the final copy, however, the warts were still evident Edward Everett, the new minister to the Court of St. James's, put his clerks to work locating and copying papers in British archives for Bancroft's use, thus renewing the friendship between the two scholar-politicians shattered by the recent campaign. Frequent invitations to lecture on historical topics came, as that of December in which he spoke on *The Idea of Universal History* at the Tabernacle in New York. The correspondent of the *Sun* saw him then as "a gentleman of middle age and middle size, thin, dark-complexioned, with sharp features, with spectacles. His style of speaking is earnest and slightly impassioned; he has a sharp, angular tone of voice. . . ."

Bancroft, during these crowded years, usually arose at dawn, accomplished a day's historical work before breakfast, and then turned to the problem of rebuilding the Democratic organization in Massachusetts. He knew that his party needed an issue, a new and a good issue, and he raked the ashes of past campaigns to find

one. John Davis, his *Bay State Democrat* reported, had cheered when the British burned the capitol in 1814 — but Anglophobia failed to excite the state. Was it not true, asked the *Democrat* of the Whigs, that Davis was a "blue-light Federalist," a grafting politician, an avowed enemy of the common man? But the voters refused to take the charges of the *Democrat* seriously enough, and in the 1841 elections Davis won over Morton by four thousand votes, a larger majority than it seemed for the voting was light. Lucius Boltwood of Amherst, the candidate of the abolitionist Liberty party, polled 3,488 votes, nearly enough to elect Morton. Bancroft, searching for an issue upon which to rebuild his party, may have noted that slavery, an issue ready to hand, lay waiting, but he dared not risk splitting his party. The abolitionist vote was ready to be absorbed, as the Anti-Masons and the Workingmen had been to a large extent absorbed by the Democrats, and the Democratic party might have tried to work out a compromise with it. Whittier, Channing, Garrison, and the rest had started a movement that in time would rip the existing party alignment wide apart, but in 1841 few knew its importance.

Bancroft kept in close touch with Martin Van Buren during 1842, apprising him from month to month of the progress of the party in Massachusetts, progress that was slow and unsatisfactory. The opinion of Boston concerning the party was summarized by Charles Dicken's, who wrote his friend Macready in London as he was fêted on the tour which left so much ill-will behind him: "I speak of Bancroft, and am advised to be silent on the matter, for he is a black sheep, a Democrat" Emerson wrote in his journal: "Bancroft and Bryant are historical democrats, who are interested in dead or organized, but not in organizing, liberty Bancroft

it be, suggested Bancroft to the ex-president, that Tyler and Calhoun planned to rebuild the Democratic party around themselves, freezing out Van Buren and his men? When Henshaw offered to pay hard cash for a series of pro-Tyler articles in *The Bay State Democrat, the trend of events became clearer* Tyler, the renegade Whig, and Calhoun, the old-line Democrat, planned to do exactly as Bancroft prophesied. If they succeeded, David Henshaw, the one man Bancroft and Morton feared, would certainly be placed

in control of the rebuilt Democratic party in Massachusetts.

Unfortunately there was little that could be done about it, and only some phenomenal good luck in the 1842 elections saved Morton and Bancroft for the moment. Neither Davis nor Morton polled a clear majority — Sewall, the Liberty candidate, polled enough to elect either one — and by law the governorship went to the legislature, where it was deadlocked in the lower house with the abolitionists holding the balance of power Morton won out, but only because the Whigs, who could not work out a satisfactory compromise with the antislavery men, shifted votes to Morton rather than allow Davis to face a hostile legislature. Morton's v[illegible]
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move, and when in June, 1843, Tyler came to Boston to discuss the prospects for the 1844 elections, men began to desert the ranks of the Van Burenites. Rantoul and Hallett, both long-time Democrats, became suddenly cool to Bancroft. It was perfectly plain that Tyler and Calhoun, out to build a new party, were systematically looting the old one. Bancroft attended Henshaw's dinner in honor of Tyler, though it pained him to do so. It seemed to him that Tyler was "a weak man," and he noted that the President laced his water-glass with rum beneath the cover of the tablecloth Shortly afterwards the effects of Tyler's visit became apparent. Henshaw went to Washington to be Secretary of the Navy; the Whig Levi Lincoln was removed from the Collectorship and Robert Rantoul replaced him; five other Henshaw men went into patronage positions. There was no doubt about the fact that Henshaw was clearly on his way back to power, safely provided for by Tyler and Calhoun.

However much political ill-fortune dogged his footsteps, it was pleasant for Bancroft to remember that as a scholar he was still held in high estimation. He was at the speakers' table of the dinner given in honor of Charles Dickens in New York in early 1842, and gave a speech that the *Sun* thought was ". . . heated, intense, striking, yet longwinded." In December of the same year he embarked on a lecture tour of the Middle Atlantic States, receiving welcome wherever he went. In Philadelphia he met the feminist, Lucretia Mott, and talked with Franklin Bache about his distin-

guished ancestor, Ben Franklin. The Maryland State Senate requested an address, and he spent a week end with Charles Carroll of Carrollton on his estate. In Baltimore he visited Peter Force, the archivist, and in Washington and Annapolis he gathered documents of historical interest for his own collections.

Harvard, shortly after his return, gave an honorary degree to the distinguished historian who had left its halls under a cloud twenty years before, and in early 1843 he was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Harvard Board of Overseers Bancroft had not changed his mind about Harvard, however, and a few months after he had received his appointment he wrote the minority report of the Board's Committee of Visitation, pointing out the diminished number of Harvard's students and condemning the college as decadent and sectarian, narrow and expensive A student named Rutherford B. Hayes heard him speak at Cambridge, and although he found him "a very inferior man in appearance, said to be penurious and even mean in his private affairs," he judged him to be "one of the most interesting speakers I have ever heard." Henry David Thoreau, curator of the Concord Lyceum, must have agreed, for he invited him that month to appear as a speaker with Emerson, Parker, Horace Greeley, and others on the Concord platform

Whatever his recognition as a scholar, Bancroft's political fortunes were at their lowest ebb The Henshaw faction administered a stinging slap to his prestige in September when, although he was chairman of the state Democratic caucus which met to appoint delegates to the national convention, they prevented his election from Boston's ninth ward as a caucus delegate Thus, without a vote, Bancroft as chairman presided over the meeting, and to add to the betrayal, the floor-leader appointed by Henshaw to insure the election of Tyler-Calhoun delegates to the presidential convention was none other than the renegade Benjamin F Hallett. Working under such difficulties, Bancroft and Morton showed their upstart Tylerite opponents a few tricks, the historian wrote Van Buren later. Bancroft might not have a vote himself except by virtue of his chairmanship, but he still controlled most of the rural delegates, and when the smoke cleared it was found that eleven of the twelve delegates to the national meeting were Van Buren men, Bancroft himself among them, and Marcus Morton was once more candidate for governor. The two party leaders had

won again, but the party was hopelessly split between Henshaw's Tyler-Calhoun wing and the Bancroft-Morton Van Burenites. It could not hope for success unless the breach were healed.

In the state elections of 1843 the Whigs put up a new candidate, George Briggs, for John Davis wished to retire from politics Briggs was a good choice, and Morton was defeated by some three thousand votes. The Liberty candidate significantly polled nine thousand votes. Morton himself was tired. He had run for governor sixteen times, fourteen of them unsuccessfully, a political career that had begun in Jackson's day and before. Morton's defeat seemed less serious when in January the news came from Washington that the Whigs in the Senate had rebelled against Tyler, refusing to confirm Henshaw as Secretary of the Navy and Rantoul as Collector of the Port of Boston, for Tyler's tactics angered both Whigs and Democrats. The lines of cleavage were now clear. If Van Buren were nominated and elected, Bancroft and Morton would be back in power; if he were not, the careers of both were at an end Bancroft went to Baltimore to the national convention with eleven out of twelve Van Buren votes in his pocket. He knew how Massachusetts would vote.

Despite his loyalty to Van Buren, cemented by years of close cooperation and correspondence, Bancroft felt misgivings over his leader's chances at the convention. Van Buren refused to see the light on the Texas question, despite the urgings of his campaign lieutenants, and the Texas issue was incandescent. Bancroft had in progress, and nearly finished, a campaign biography of "Little Van," and he was certain that unless its subject reversed his opinions it might well remain unfinished. Many of the Democratic leaders believed that the Republic of Texas, its independence from Mexico fully won and established, ought to be a part of the United States, and annexationist feeling ran high, especially in the Southern branch of the party. Yet Van Buren steadily refused to treat the Texas question as an issue of importance in the coming campaign. In early May Bancroft advised "leaning a little more in favor of the rights of Texas," and at the convention in Baltimore he told Van Buren:

The fever here is very high . . . The city is full of disorganizers Our Louisiana delegate is in the house with me· he is furious on the Texas matter; it is his first word and his last; I walked with him for half an

hour to mollify him: but he would not be soothed: Texas must immediately become American.

Van Buren ignored the hint, and on the first day of the convention his display of strength in the balloting was not impressive. Faithfully, Massachusetts, New York, and the New England states voted for him, but on the second day Lewis Cass of Michigan crept up in the race, though the key states of New York and Massachusetts held fast in the Van Buren column. At the end of the day's voting Bancroft talked the matter over with the York Staters They would never vote for Cass, they affirmed, and if he were nominated the voters of New York and New England would certainly bolt the party. There were too many others ready to swing to Cass, however; Bancroft calculated that if R M Johnson, candidate for vice-president, made a deal with the Cass men and took his supporters with him, Cass would have one hundred and fifty-seven votes, enough to deadlock the convention The Tennessee delegation, headed by Gideon Pillow, had an idea — why not put forward as a compromise candidate James Knox Polk of Tennessee? He was comparatively unknown in the East, but he came from the South, had Old Hickory's blessing, and appealed to the Western vote where Cass's strength lay. Bancroft thought it over He remembered the name of Polk Harris, his editor from the early days of *The Bay State Democrat* and editor of the Nashville *Union* since 1839, had mentioned him for vice-president some years before and had told Bancroft of him The problem resolved itself in Bancroft's mind to one of two alternatives either the party would go down with Van Buren and Cass deadlocked, or take a chance with the unknown Polk Certainly the future of the Massachusetts Democrats looked brighter with Polk, although its delegation was almost solidly pledged to Van Buren.

That night, the second of the convention, was busy. The New Hampshire delegation, pledged to Van Buren, agreed that their favorite's chances for nomination were slim and that Polk, unknown as he was, was probably a better choice than Cass. Pillow reported to Bancroft early in the evening that Mississippi and Alabama had fallen into line behind Polk, and the two men went to the rooms engaged by the huge delegations from New York and Ohio. By midnight Bancroft had the promise of Medary of Ohio to swing his votes to Polk, and Kemble of New York, after a long

argument, followed suit. Bancroft went to bed that night, "tranquil and happy." In the morning he talked to the men from Maryland and Louisiana who, when they perceived the direction of the wind, joined in the shift of votes. At the meeting the New England delegates reserved for themselves the honor of the first Polk votes, and when Hubbard of New Hampshire announced the vote of his state on the first ballot of the day (the eighth of the session), and Bancroft of Massachusetts arose to give that of his, a stunned silence filled the hall, broken by sudden cheers from the Western delegations Next Frazer of Pennsylvania rose to swing his block of delegates to "the bosom friend of General Jackson, and a pure whole-hogged democrat, the known enemy of banks and distribution." As the roll continued Bancroft saw Roane of Virginia, a strong Cass state, working over his unruly delegates, and when New York and Pennsylvania went for Polk amid cheers from the floor, he saw Roane's gesture of despair and knew that it was all over. The next ballot, the ninth, was the last, and thus James Knox Polk, obscure Tennessee Democrat, became the first presidential dark horse in United States history

Bancroft took good care to inform Polk of his part in the nomination, for he knew that it might pay dividends, and immediately sent a letter to the Tennessean, recounting the whole story in detail and promising New England's whole-hearted support to his campaign. At home in Boston, after addressing a jubilant meeting of Democrats in Faneuil Hall, he suddenly found himself an unwilling candidate for office. Marcus Morton, tired of campaigning, yielded the gubernatorial candidacy to the historian and there was little for Bancroft to do but accept. Briggs was a powerful opponent, and Bancroft knew it. The nomination by the Whigs of Henry Clay for the presidency, a choice highly approved by Massachusetts, made the Whig ticket of Briggs and Clay nearly unbeatable. Bancroft entered into the race with his usual energy, finding time in the midst of his speechmaking to spend sometimes twelve hours a day working in the New York Historical Society library examining Dutch documents concerning the colonization of New England. The biography of Van Buren lay unfinished, not to appear in print until forty-five years later, and the press of study and campaigning forced him to refuse an offer from J. G. Harris to write one in Polk's behalf.

The issues of the state elections were old ones, for both Briggs

and Bancroft avoided the hotly debated slavery question — corporations, taxes, aid to agriculture, the railroads, labor's rights, free schools, hard money, a lowered tariff, internal improvements, Oregon, Texas, and the rest. One issue, however, Bancroft unwisely raked up from the campaigns of 1842 — should Governor Dorr of Rhode Island, in prison because he attempted to seize the state assembly by force after his supporters had framed a convention calling for universal suffrage, be freed from his cell? The Dorr case had little actual importance in Massachusetts politics, and little if any bearing upon the gubernatorial campaign, but Bancroft, seeing in it an opportunity to expound and defend the principles of wider suffrage and the power of the people, took Dorr's side. "The Democracy of Massachusetts admire the manly firmness of Dorr on his trial, and express sympathy with him in his affliction," Bancroft told the Whigs, blaming them for the Rhode Islander's incarceration, "and we shall give you no rest till, in the legal and constitutional way, you effect his freedom." Although the Massachusetts Whigs had nothing to do with Dorr's imprisonment, and might have disregarded the entire issue, they used Bancroft's publicly expressed defense as effective ammunition, charging the Democratic candidate with the possession of revolutionary ideas concerning the use of force in government. Dorr had, after all, attempted to seize an entire legislature in session, and whether or not he was justified in so doing was, they claimed, really beside the point. Bancroft's argument recoiled upon the arguer, and he found that even the most dissatisfied laborer looked with suspicion upon Dorr's methods, though perhaps sympathizing with his plight. There were other campaign rumors too, from somewhere the story came that Bancroft had plagiarized parts of his historical volumes and had melted down the plates to destroy the evidence of his theft, a story so palpably absurd that the Whigs let it pass without much notice. But the crisis came when, as he was about to address a meeting of farmers at the New York State Agricultural Fair in Poughkeepsie, Bancroft saw a familiar figure approaching the platform. It was Martin Van Buren, and the crowd waited expectantly — Van Buren was a slow forgiver, and this was the first meeting between the two men since the presidential convention. To the applause of the crowd the ex-President and the historian shook hands. Bancroft was glad, for Van Buren's friendship was a thing to be valued in more ways than one.

The November elections saw Bancroft lose, as he had expected, by slightly more than fifteen thousand votes, the most thorough beating received by a Democrat in a decade. The abolitionist party polled more than ten thousand votes In the campaign the real issue of the 1840's, slavery, had remained untouched by both Whig and Democrat, but it would soon be the only issue. Emerson knew it, and wrote in his journal: "The iniquity of slavery in this country is a ghost that would not down at the bidding of Boston merchants or the best democratic drill-officers."

The successful election of Polk to the presidency, however, meant more to Bancroft than the governorship of Massachusetts, and provided balm for the stinging defeat administered to him. "The Whigs have saved the state and lost the Union," said *The Bay State Democrat,* quite truthfully, for Polk's victory brought honor to the state party organization and the promise of patronage as well. Van Buren supporters, many of whom had been resentful of Bancroft's defection at the convention, now flocked to his side, for his part in Polk's nomination was well known and it was certain that Polk would show his appreciation in concrete and substantial form. With Polk's support, Bancroft was once more clearly the master of his party, despite his defeat in the state elections, and what had once been Van Buren's machine now became Polk's. It was clear to everyone that the Collectorship was again to be Bancroft's for the asking, and the mail arriving at Winthrop Place once more became heavy with expressions of good wishes and of need.

Bancroft, however, had larger plans There was little further to be gained in Massachusetts except the governorship, which he did not want, and there was some talk of a cabinet seat for him. Democrat John Bragg of Alabama said that he "knew of no one who seems to come so completely up to the standard as George Bancroft of Boston," and he wrote an editorial for the Mobile *Register* suggesting the historian for the cabinet, promising to see that it was "reprinted in the South, West, and North." But Bancroft replied frankly: "A foreign mission would better chime with my intentions. . . . No public service will please me more or break up my purposes of life so little as an appointment to Berlin or Vienna." When Polk wrote, intimating that a place in the cabinet might be his reward, he replied in a similar vein:

A post in the cabinet has not seemed to me at this time the position most favourable to my efficiency. . . . The German language, as well as the French, is almost as familiar to me as English In making up your arrangement for the foreign corps, if the mission to Prussia were offered me, I should certainly accept it.

Politics had lost its savour, and the world of society, of scholarship, of the companionship of learned men called to him — a cabinet post simply meant more politics, an unfinished history, and an eventual return to the boiling party struggles of Massachusetts

In February Bancroft went to Washington, the better to further his plans, but he wrote his wife that "the president-elect keeps his own counsels most closely . . If anybody asks you, say that I shall probably go as envoy to Japan." He left a card with Calhoun, and spent an evening with old Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, listening to his handsome son-in-law, John Frémont, tell stories of the Oregon country from which he had recently returned. He was still in Washington in March, and still knew nothing more about Polk's plans, but after the inauguration ceremonies were over he knew he had been disappointed On March 3 Polk sent him official notice of his appointment to the cabinet as Secretary of the Navy. Privately the new President promised that a diplomatic mission might come later, so on March 5 Bancroft replied to the invitation in the affirmative. Several Massachusetts Democrats objected to the appointment, and threatened to block Senate confirmation of it on the grounds that Bancroft was an abolitionist When the historian's name came before the Senate a few weeks later, Senator Archer of Virginia asked for and obtained a day's postponement, during which he and Allen of Ohio requested of Bancroft a list of his writings dealing with slavery. The articles passed inspection — Allen said that he agreed with most of Bancroft's major points — and the cabinet position was assured Bancroft, having frankly stated his wishes to Polk two months before, could hardly have been expected to look upon a cabinet post with unmixed pleasure, but he saw the position as a possible stepping-stone, and resolved to do his best to administer his duties with courage and efficiency.

Back in Boston he made ready to depart for the national capital. Marcus Morton, newly appointed Collector of the Port, fell heir

to the leadership of the state organization of the Democratic party and Bancroft left to him the task of fighting Henshaw, whose friendship with Calhoun still afforded him some patronage and thus some power. *The Bay State Democrat* he merged with Josselyn's *Daily Times*, with instructions to follow a pro-Polk, pro-Texas, pro-Morton policy, and as a last dramatic gesture, his pockets filled with Polk's and Morton's appointments, he called a meeting of the Democratic leaders at his home, there to pass out the patronage plums Brownson was there, and Rantoul, and Hallett, and the others Hallett came with an expectant look which ripened into a satisfied smile when Bancroft, as Brownson reported it, "danced" up to him and said· "Ah, Mr. Hallett, I am charmed to see you— I know what a debt the party owes you, and I will not rest until I see you are appreciated and rewarded." Revenge was very pleasant Bancroft said nothing of the kind to anyone else, yet Hallett was the only man who left the house without an office. In a month Bancroft and his wife were in Washington, living in Frank Blair's home, a large rambling house diagonally across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, near the homes of Stephen Decatur, John Rodgers, Dolly Madison, John Slidell, and Daniel Sickles.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Politician and the Diplomat 1845–1849

THE WHIGS asked ironically, "Who is James K. Polk?" but after his election they found that he was an intelligent, energetic politician, a man of iron will and inflexible purpose Sincerely and intensely religious, he had an unlimited faith in his own ideals and brooked no obstacles in attaining them. His fixity of purpose made it difficult to act in harmony with him, and his administration was marked by a great deal of factional controversy, but he nearly always succeeded in putting his designs into effect Forty years after Polk was in his grave Bancroft told how one day, when he and the President were alone during the first weeks of his administration, Polk had explained to him four aims he expected to see concluded during his term — a reduction of the tariff, the acquisition of California, the settlement of the Oregon boundary question, and the establishment of an independent Treasury In all of these he was, in the main, successful, and in their attainment Bancroft lent him valuable assistance.

Polk's administration fell within a period of American history when four great forces were in operation — democracy, humanitarian reform, expansion, and sectionalism. The realization of political equality had left little to be accomplished in that direction, and the crusaders turned their attention in the thirties and forties to the accomplishment of social and economic equality; many agreed with Emerson that the least of men had a spark of the divine in him, and that he was meant by the Deity to be held neither in social nor in economic bondage. The democratic and the humanitarian-reform movements had melted together, finding common objectives — slavery, women's rights, labor laws, the liquor trade, and so on. In 1831 William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* ap-

peared, and in the same year the first of the new abolitionist societies was formed. Movements to alleviate the sufferings of the insane, the blind, the sick, of children, of animals; conventions for women's rights, against the blue-law Sabbath, for temperance, for world peace, for penal reform, and a dozen other purposes, vied for the public attention. The thirties saw the rise of labor unions, of labor journalism, and the early attempts of labor to obtain favorable legislation by the exertion of political influence, as in Bancroft's own Workingmen's party in Massachusetts

New England was inundated by a wave of reforms, spiritual, social, personal, economic. It was not an evangelism of the underprivileged, a class bootstrap-lifting of the repressed, but a movement in which the rich and poor, the famous and the unknown, co-operated, one to which great names lent prestige — no one could lightly toss off Howes and Lowells and Emersons and Quincys and Sumners as self-seeking zealots with axes to grind. Neither was it a mass revival, a psycho-emotional phenomenon like the Great Awakening of a century before, but a sincere and serious movement, with the eccentric, it is true, showing at its fringes. All the various shades of reform and degrees of enthusiasm, from vegetarianism to phrenology, from ten-hour days to abolition, from transcendentalism to spiritualism, stemmed from one root, a belief in the divine perfectibility of man and an optimistic faith in his progress This belief sent perfectly sane and hard-headed Yankees to Brook Farm and Fruitlands; it sent even Emerson to lectures on Swedenborgianism and abolition meetings, the Rev. Dr. Channing to the pulpit to preach socialism, and the Rev. John Sargent to temperance meetings, Edmund Quincy to the Chardon Street Convention (Emerson thought it "disorderly but picturesque"), and Theodore Parker to lessons in mesmerism. Transcendentalism was perhaps at the bottom of it all, giving the entire movement depth and ballast, a buttressing philosophy, but the spirit touched many who had never read Coleridge or Kant and many who knew nothing of the transcendental Reason. Emerson summed it up best with the observation that the cause lay in "the conclusion that there is an infinite worthiness in man, which will appear at the call of worth, and that all particular reforms are the removing of some impediment." They all were interested simply in removing impediments. They all believed and trusted in the innate worth of mankind, in man's ability to progress toward a state of divinity,

and a good digestion, a ten-hour working day, sensible apparel for women, temperance, better jails, abolition, and a state of spiritual communion with God were steps intended to take humanity a few paces farther toward that objective. But above and beyond all the efforts to secure social and economic equality, and all humanitarian reforms, whatever their purpose, stood the antislavery question, the major question of the era and one to which every thinking man must perforce provide an answer.

Bancroft himself entered actively into none of the numerous reform movements, although he was clearly in sympathy with the aims of most of them. Probably through some lingering distaste for the mass-meeting, soap-box type of reform, with its attendant heckling and an occasional broken window or head, he avoided participation in the frequent gatherings for the benefit of particular causes. The general cause of reform, he knew, was safe, for the divinely ordained law of progress guaranteed the eventual advancement of the human race. Whittier, Garrison, and the others saw the sufferings of the individual and attempted to find a specific, immediately applicable remedy for his plight. Bancroft thought in larger terms, in terms of the race, of mankind in the aggregate. He was somewhat suspicious of reformers "The radical who makes war upon everything in which he can discern a fault," he wrote, "becomes a destructive, and while he may be of service when it is proper to overthrow, he never knows how to spare or how to rebuild." History had shown him that the fate of the individual was merged in the fate of the race, that evil and injustice were temporary, and that the inevitable flow of events brought a remedy, in time, for the economic and social evils against which the reformers fought. He was willing to lend his name, and occasionally his presence, to a worthy cause, but the cold-water, anti-Sabbath, food-fad type of reform he passed by. He was a philosophical reformer, interested in the basic and not the immediate cause of humanity's ills.

Slavery was the paramount problem faced by all national executives from 1830 to 1860, and one which highly intensified the clamor over territorial expansion which marked the early months of Polk's administration Had it not been for the increasing bitterness of the slavery controversy, the way of the expansionists might have been smooth and the Republic of Texas might have been annexed in 1837, shortly after its disputed independence from Mex-

ico had been won. Tyler had worked for it unsuccessfully, in the face of stubborn opposition from many in New England, who firmly believed that the annexation was desired not wholly for territorial purposes, but simply as a part of a vast conspiracy to add one or more slave states to the Union. In addition to the Texas question, the matter of the Oregon boundary line had caused friction with England for many years, providing another problem for the expansionist elements both North and South. Since 1818, when a ten-year agreement of joint occupancy had been signed, quarrels over the assignment of an exact boundary for the territory had appeared with regularity. The line as far west as the Rockies had been placed at the 49th parallel, the United States offering to extend it to the coast, and Britain consistently refusing any agreement which did not give her the north bank of the Columbia river In 1843, a year before Polk's election, the Oregon settlers, forming a government of their own, asked territorial status from Congress, bringing the boundary question directly to the attention of the nation. The possible occupation of Oregon seemed to many Southern Democrats an opportunity to placate the North for the proposed annexation of Texas as well as a chance to add to the territory of the Union, and "Fifty-four forty or fight!" became part of the Democratic platform, despite the fact that the fifty-fourth parallel was distinctly unacceptable to England as a boundary.

Two of Polk's goals, then, the annexation of Texas and the negotiation of the Oregon claims, were directly concerned with vital national forces over and beyond the confines of party politics The others, the tariff and the independent treasury, were more clearly measures of domestic policy. To the re-establishment of an independent treasury there was little opposition from either Whig or Democrat, but the tariff question was a different matter. The state of government finances during Tyler's term had led him to tamper with the protective tariff, while Polk's famous "Kane letter" to Calhoun before the 1844 elections gave the impression that the new President was in favor of protection Whatever interpretation had been placed upon his statements by the Northern Democratic orators, Polk was essentially a free-trader, as were many of the wheat-growing Western and cotton-South Democrats who followed their own interests and the advanced English economic theorists, Cobden and Bright. Polk's desire for a reduced tariff was certain to lead toward a sectional struggle between protectionist and free-

trader, between the manufacturing North and the agricultural Northwest and South.

When James Knox Polk took office he found himself, therefore, confronted by a set of knotty problems. The cabinet he selected to assist him in his attempts to solve them testified to his intelligence and his political acumen as well as to his obstinacy. Tyler, hoping that his tardy and somewhat lackadaisical support of Polk in the elections would move the Tennessean to retain at least some of his appointees, was straightway disappointed. Calhoun, it had been presumed by the Tylerites and many of the Southern Democrats, would be kept as Secretary of State, but he was replaced at once by James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, only one of Tyler's friends to go Robert J Walker of Mississippi came in as Secretary of the Treasury, a man fully in accord with Polk's tariff and treasury policies, but not in good standing with the Northern Democrats The appointment of William Marcy of New York, a conservative or "Hunker," as Secretary of War, alienated a good many Van Burenites, who were already at the point of revolt over "Little Van's" failure to gain a place on the ticket in the elections Ban-

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capable, a group of men in agreement with Polk concerning most of the things he wished to do, clear of Tyler or Van Buren adherents, though not calculated to produce the maximum of harmony within the party organization. The fact that Polk was able to appoint such a cabinet, and to control it in the face of not inconsiderable opposition within his own party, bore testimony to his political astuteness and to his stubbornness of purpose.

In March of 1845 George Bancroft moved from the affairs of Massachusetts into the larger sphere of Washington, never again to take up residence in the state of his birth. His two stepsons were at Harvard, William Bliss in the class of 1846, Alexander a year behind him, and his own two boys by his first marriage were in school at Roxbury, Massachusetts There were many of his friends in Washington, as well as many of his enemies, and thriving as he always did in an atmosphere of political and intellectual excitement, he entered with eagerness into the bustle of Washington life His wife and he would have enjoyed the brisk calendar of receptions, embassy gatherings, and banquets, but the death of

their six-year-old daughter, Susan, not long after their arrival, saddened them. They were left with little desire for social life, and they spent many evenings quietly at home, with twelve-year-old Louisa for company.

Polk's inaugural message and his first message to Congress laid down the schedule of events to come, and Bancroft bent his energies to helping the President attain his objectives The tariff fight was not his affair, but Walker's, as was that of the treasury, although Bancroft gave his fellow cabinet member some assistance by convincing doubtful Chairman McKay of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee that Polk's and Walker's reduced tariff would provide sufficient revenue for the operation of the government. As Secretary of the Navy Bancroft's duty lay in directing the affairs and disposition of the naval forces so as to assist Polk in maintaining national safety throughout the delicate procedure of settling the Oregon and Texas controversies with England and Mexico. In addition to preparing the Navy for the eventuality of war, Bancroft's additional task, by explicit direction of Polk, was to rehabilitate the naval department, to raise its standards and morale, and to improve the service in every way possible. The Navy, as he found it, was split with dissension, with rivalry among the officers, murmurings of discontent among the sailors, an unwieldy and out-moded system of education and promotion that produced inferior officers, and an arbitrary and brutal code of laws and corresponding punishments A division between deck and engineer officers threatened to wreck morale, and constant bickering in the Navy had left Congress and much of the nation impatient with the service as a whole.

Bancroft's unfamiliarity with salt-water tradition and his open-minded reception of expert advice led to some immediate and sensible innovations in naval policy He interposed to outlaw the casual flogging of seamen by officers (although the cat-o'-nine-tails still remained as official punishment), thereby incurring the wrath of the many old-school Navy men to whom the daily use of the rope's-end was as natural as grog, but earning the gratitude of many a sailor, including that of a New England sailor-writer named Herman Melville. A far greater outcry was occasioned by his abolition of the iron-clad rule of promotion by seniority, a regulation which had hampered naval efficiency for fifty years. Bancroft, flouting tradition, gave orders that from 1815 on promotions in rank would

be made strictly on the basis of ability, a change that in time proved to be one of the greatest reforms ever introduced into the American Navy. Facing both a hostile set of old-line officers and a Congress unsympathetic to naval problems, he gained larger appropriations for and wrought greater reforms in the Navy than had any of his immediate predecessors, improving the Naval Observatory, regularizing promotions, and making the lot of the seaman far better than it had ever been

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Jones had seen it years before in 1776, summing the matter up in a statement that the Navy had unfortunately forgotten "It is by no means enough that an officer of the Navy should be a capable mariner. He should be as well a gentleman of liberal education and refined manners" The officers of the Navy in 1845 were often neither gentlemen, educated, nor refined They had in most cases come to their rank up the hard and brutalizing path from the *midshipman's berth, and many showed the effects of their journey,* with little decisiveness, little initiative, and less education. The British drew officers from an educated, aristocratic class, but without such a caste to tap for material, the United States Navy had no such supply of selected candidates, highly educated and alert, at home in any society on land or sea. In the spirit of John Paul Jones, Bancroft discerned the need for an officer's school in which midshipmen could be educated and indoctrinated until they were ready for their commissions and responsibilities, a school which would supply the type of officer-material the British had ready at hand The need had been perceived half-heartedly before, it was true; Congress had twice voted down appropriations for a naval academy, but Bancroft determined to push the matter through despite the expected Congressional opposition.

The situation was, in 1845, not without hope. Until 1840 midshipmen had been sent to sea to learn their profession by actual experience, although on the larger ships there had been placed a few teachers (mostly political appointees) who gave instruction in mathematics and navigation but who had no rank, no authority, and usually little ability In 1840 two schools had been established, at Philadelphia and Norfolk, but the midshipmen found there small opportunity for study between their frequent trips to sea.

Bancroft perceived that the Philadelphia and Norfolk schools provided an opening wedge, and when the Naval Board of Examiners met at Philadelphia in June, 1845, he wrote:

I desire the assistance of your board in maturing a more efficient system of instruction for young naval officers . . . The present time of instruction is too short. Might it not be well to have permanent instruction, and to send all midshipmen on shore to school?

The Board, composed of Commanders Read, Jones, and Perry, and Captains Lavallette and Mayo, observed at once the drift of the Secretary's thought, and on June 25 they replied with a full report of a plan for an academy, suggesting Fort Severn, a Maryland Army fort built in 1808 near Annapolis, as a possible site. With the naval report in hand, Bancroft proceeded to work out the details on his own initiative, despite the fact that Congress had previously proved itself wholly indifferent to the idea.

The establishment of an academy and the provision of an adequate staff would require, Bancroft was aware, some devious operations Study of the powers of the Secretary of the Navy revealed the fact that he could order the midshipmen to report to a certain place to await further orders and that he possessed the power to order the seagoing instructors to follow their charges ashore. With close economy the Congressional appropriation for the Navy might be made to cover the added expense of instruction on land. Since Bancroft had been made Acting Secretary of War during Marcy's temporary absence, the cession of Fort Severn and its buildings to the Navy was an easy matter. The Army post was simply signed over to the Navy after a tour of inspection with Commander Warrington, Chief of Navy Yards and Docks, and after the transfer of the Army garrison to Fortress Monroe.

In June, July, and August, as the ships began to come in, Bancroft went to work The midshipmen he ordered to report to quarters at Annapolis Of the twenty-five teachers then in the naval service eighteen were put "on waiting orders" (that is, their services were dispensed with), a clear saving of $30,000 yearly. Of the remaining instructors four were called to Annapolis, and with them a lieutenant to teach steam and gunnery. By late July Bancroft had the skeleton plan for an academy, a staff, and a body of students, quite within the limits of his legal powers and the naval

budget. All that was lacking was a man to head the school, and the Naval Board quickly met this need by appointing Commander Franklin Buchanan, one of Perry's old captains, a hard-driving, liquor-hating seadog with thirty years in the Navy behind him. "The aim of the academy," Bancroft wrote to him on the eve of his installation, "is to make midshipmen as distinguished for culture as they have been for gallant conduct " Buchanan was clearly *the man to do it.*

On October 10, 1845, the Naval Academy opened at eleven in the morning, as Buchanan read Bancroft's letter to several boys meeting in a classroom in an old shed, and as fast as the vessels reached port Bancroft detached their midshipmen and sent them to Annapolis. Naturally the activity in the Navy Department caused comment, both in and out of the Navy, and until the full import of the Secretary's plan became clear it was presumed by many that the change was merely that of the original school from Philadelphia to Annapolis It was much more than that. Buchanan stiffened discipline and raised the standards of deportment to previously unknown levels The midshipmen at first did not understand, but when in the first six months Buchanan dismissed two for insubordination, four for drunkenness, and one for an extreme case of delirium tremens, they began to see his point. Since the

course of study broadened and lengthened as the school grew, a far cry from the elementary mathematics and navigation of a few years before — English grammar, English composition, arithmetic, geography, navigation, history, gunnery, the use of steam, Spanish, French, optics, ordnance, electricity, natural philosophy, chemistry, fencing, drill, and "such other branches as desirable."

In the fall of 1845, when Congress returned from its recess, the Secretary's annual report presented it with a fully organized naval academy in smooth and efficient operation. Congress gave up and appropriated nearly $30,000 for its continuance. Thus in less than

adequate professional preparation, something that the Navy had

always lacked — a sense of unity in the service, a feeling of responsibility, an officer caste serving the republic — and when the young officers went out in the late forties and the fifties to command the swift new steam frigates, they were men on whom the ghosts of John Paul Jones, Stephen Decatur, Edward Preble, and the rest of the oak-hearted captains of the past could look with pride and satisfaction.

The relative importance of his rehabilitation of the Navy was greatly overshadowed in Bancroft's mind by the most pressing problem confronting Polk as he took office, the question of Mexican-American relations, the acceptance of Texas into the Union, and the possible annexation of California, on which both England and the United States were casting covetous glances in 1845. Polk and his party were committed to the annexation of Texas, and the expansionist element in the Democratic ranks, which included the Secretary of the Navy, believed the acquisition of California equally feasible and desirable Although most Massachusetts Democrats looked on an annexationist stand as politically fatal, since the powerful New England abolitionist group stood squarely against it, Bancroft from the first put himself on record as favoring immediate incorporation of the Texan Republic into the Union In the party's state convention at Worcester in 1844 he had argued that such a statement be included in the platform, and it was Bancroft, among others, who attempted to persuade Van Buren to reverse his policy on the Texas question before the national convention in the same year. After he had taken his post in the cabinet in 1845 he wrote an editorial for the Boston *Times,* pointing out to the antislavery voters of New England that despite their arguments, annexation would actually be a blow to slavery — if Texas remained an independent Republic, it could and would import slaves, if it became part of the Union, it could not legally trade in slaves. Failure to annex it was therefore in essence a move toward revival of the slave trade. His argument failed to convince, however, and his attitude on the Texas question simply helped to make him more unpopular than ever in Boston and Cambridge, where many believed that the historian had sold himself to the pro-slavery, pro-Southern wing of the Democratic party.

He had, of course, done nothing of the kind. His antislavery sentiments were perfectly obvious from his published articles in the *North American Review* of 1831–34, "Slavery in Rome" and

"The Economy of Athens," and his distrust of the slavery wing of his party was equally evident. True, the addition of Texas votes in Congress might strengthen Southern influence, but in his opinion it was far better to increase the political strength of the South than to allow a slave-holding, slave-trading Republic, which might possibly be taken over by England in the future, to exist on the national borders For that matter, the admission of California as a free state would immediately counteract any increased Southern strength in Congress. Polk's plan, in which Bancroft concurred, was quite clear — accept the entrance of Texas as a state, then purchase California, preserving the balance of power in Congress while at the same time expanding the nation's territory.

The one flaw in the plan was the uncooperative attitude of Mexico, which ten years of incompetent diplomacy on the part of the United States had failed to change. Mexico, since its freedom from Spain, was disorganized, plagued by revolutionaries, disunited, arrogant, and financially unstable Its tremendous North American possessions (New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California); its mixed population of a million whites, four million Indians, and two millions of mixed blood; and the claims held against it by France, England, Spain, and the United States, presented its weak and transitory governments with insurmountable difficulties. It had never officially recognized the existence of Texas as an independent republic, and the diplomacy of Wilson Shannon and Anthony Butler as well as its relations with the Texas Republic since its secession had left the question a touchy one Polk therefore faced, when he entered office, a delicate and explosive problem in diplomacy, one with which he in particular was ill-fitted to deal.

John Tyler threw the Texas affair in Polk's lap without apology. In December of 1844, after bluntly warning Congress that England might take Texas if the United States did not, he asked for annexation by joint resolution, since the two-thirds majority necessary to a treaty was lacking. In early March of 1845 Congress passed such a resolution, permitting Texas to enter on one condition, that the Missouri Compromise line be extended through it if the territory were later subdivided into smaller states, and in the last hours of his administration Tyler signed the bill. When Polk was inaugurated the next day a war was in the making. The bland annexation of a portion of Mexico which had never been recog-

speech at Northampton nineteen years before. Jackson came to the presidency, the speaker said, as "the inspired prophet of the West . . . , like one of the mightiest forest trees of his own land, vigorous and colossal, sending its summit to the skies, and growing on its native soil in wild and inimitable magnificence, careless of beholders " Jackson *was* America, ". . . the representative, for his generation, of the American mind," for ". . by intuitive conception he shared and possessed all the creative ideas of his country and his time. . " The extent to which Bancroft tended to read his own political principles into Jackson's ideas is illustrated by a passage from the speech which reflected almost exactly what the speaker had already said in *The Office of the People*. Jackson had proved

. . that the people can discern right, and will make their way to a knowledge of right, that the whole human mind, and therefore with it the mind of the nation, has a continuous, ever-improving existence, that the appeal from the unjust legislation of today must be made quietly, earnestly, perseveringly, to the more enlightened collective reason of tomorrow, that submission is due to the popular will, in the confidence that the people, when in error, will amend their doings: that in a popular government injustice is neither to be established by force, nor to be resisted by force; in a word, that the Union, which was constituted by consent, must be preserved by love.

Thus was Old Hickory laid in his grave Six months later Frank Blair of Missouri, to whom Jackson had bequeathed his papers, offered them to Bancroft for use in a biography Bancroft agreed to the plan, but the book was never written, he had said all that he had to say, and there was nothing a biography could add.

A few weeks after the Jackson oration Hawthorne's case came up again, with Charles Sumner, Horatio Bridge, and O'Sullivan working in his behalf. If the Salem postmastership was not available, could Bancroft put the writer into the Salem customhouse? Hawthorne, Sumner told Mrs Bancroft, was living on next to nothing, his savings lost in Ripley's ill-fated Brook Farm venture, his Concord home gone, his spirits low. "Set me down as without influence," Bancroft wrote Sumner, "if so soon as the course of business will properly permit, you do not find Hawthorne an office holder." The customs position was within Marcus Morton's, not Bancroft's, sphere of patronage, and he offered instead a clerkship

in Charlestown Navy Yard at $900 a year. Hawthorne, evidently not so close to starvation as Sumner believed, refused the position; and finally a year later in March, after exhaustive correspondence, the desired appointment as surveyor in the customhouse came to give the writer temporary security.

Events moved swiftly through the summer and fall of 1845. In May Marcy gave up for the time being his cabinet post, and on the 31st Bancroft became Acting Secretary of War, handling both the affairs of the Army and the Navy, an extremely responsible position in the light of the increasing tension with Mexico. Marcy, two days before his departure, warned General Zachary Taylor at Fort Jesup in Louisiana that his successor would communicate important orders within a month, and on June 1 Bancroft sent Taylor one of the most important letters he had ever written.

Anticipating the acceptance by Texas of an invitation to join the Union, Taylor was to take position "on or near the Rio Grande," occupying a site "best adapted to repel invasion, and to protect what, in the event of annexation, will be our western border." Taylor put his troops into motion immediately, and at President Herrera's request, the Mexican Congress voted to increase the size of the Mexican Army. To Commodore Sloat, commanding the Pacific Naval Squadron, went orders from Bancroft on June 27 labelled "Secret and Confidential " Sloat must "avoid any act which could be construed as aggression," yet "should Mexico be resolutely bent on hostilities," he must "protect the persons and interests of the citizens of the United States" in California Should war be declared, Sloat must occupy San Francisco at once, and such other ports as the strength of his force might permit. It was of paramount importance, the orders emphasized, to "preserve the most friendly relations with the inhabitants of California," and to "encourage them to adopt a course of neutrality." The plan for California, it seemed from Bancroft's instructions, was to be about the same as that employed in handling the Texas problem — avoid a show of force, protect the lives and property of nationals, and allow any overt action to come from Mexico.

By July the pattern of events was clearer. History was in the making, there was no time, Bancroft told a friend sadly, for the leisurely pursuit of it through the pages of the past. On the 4th of the month Texas sent word to Washington that the Republic had accepted a place in the Union, and the Mexican press ran banner

headlines shouting "Union or War!" Baron Gerolt, for many years Prussian minister to Mexico, wrote Bancroft of troop movements in Mexico and predicted inevitable war The news from Gerolt was hardly needed, for on July 20 Herrera recommended that the Mexican Congress declare war as soon as the American annexation terms were concluded or as soon as American troops "invaded" Texas. Polk's course, however, was fixed, for Polk was not a man to deal in subtleties, and by his request Bancroft ordered Taylor in late July to "move as near the boundary line, the Rio Grande, as prudence will dictate," in disregard of the fact that Mexico claimed the Nueces as the boundary and the Rio Grande as Mexican.

Bancroft had a few plans of his own. In July he talked with Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, the old Western lion who was chairman of the Senate Military Affairs Committee, about a scheme he had in mind. Benton's handsome son-in-law, John Frémont, had made two trips to the far West Would Frémont like to make a third "exploratory" expedition to the Rockies and beyond into California and Oregon? Since emigration toward that area was heavy, such an expedition would provide valuable information for settlers Benton saw the point and so did Frémont, who said in his memoirs later. "In arranging the expedition, the eventualities of war were taken into consideration " The point was, that if war with Mexico broke, Frémont would have a body of picked men either "exploring" in California or poised near it in Oregon. The plan, said Frémont, was Bancroft's from the start: "His mind was alive to the bearing of actual conditions, and he knew how sometimes skill and bold action determine the advantages of a political situation." Both Frémont and Benton understood what the Secretary's orders to Sloat a month earlier implied, that if war came, the immediate appearance of an American fleet in San Francisco Bay and of a land force in northern California would discourage any plans England might entertain to seize California and Oregon for "protection" By August Frémont, with sixty of the finest scouts in the West at his back, was in Arkansas, and Zachary Taylor nearing Corpus Christi in Texas.

Despite the preparation on both sides of the Rio Grande, Bancroft and Polk were fairly certain throughout the remaining months of 1845 that Texas and California could be acquired by peaceful negotiation and purchase. In October American diplo-



"HONEST JOHN" DAVIS

Bancroft's brother-in-law, friend, and political opponent

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macy with respect to California took a new turn when Secretary of State Buchanan sent a note to Larkin, the consul at Monterey, instructing him to carry on a peaceable intrigue for the secession of California from Mexico by the voluntary action of the inhabitants, and the establishment of a republic to be annexed, Texas-fashion, when the time was ripe. Frémont, nearing Oregon with his band of explorers, might serve as a shield for such a movement. On the same day, the 14th, Bancroft dispatched a similar note to Commander Sloat, then with his squadron off Mazatlan, ordering him to keep in touch with Larkin and to assist him in inducing California to consider secession

Nevertheless it seemed clear to many, and especially to the antislavery faction in New England, that Polk and his advisers were deliberately leading the nation to war, and Theodore Parker, the Unitarian minister, sat down in his study in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, to write Bancroft a letter of advice "It is rumored about in this neighborhood," he told the Secretary, "it is the talk in State Street, that you, with others in place, are desirous of war. . . . You know from the bloody pages of history, how war in the latter ages has arrested the progress of man." Bancroft knew too, believed Parker, the damning sentence posterity passed on warmongering politicians, and as for Texas, had Bancroft forgotten his denunciation of slavery in "Slavery in Rome"? "Act only as you have written," advised Parker, "and your reputation is secure," otherwise Boston would be darkened by the smoke of his volumes of history burning in a hundred fires It was a sincere and friendly letter, and Bancroft replied in kind, disclaiming any militaristic aims and reaffirming his hatred of slavery. Parker may have been convinced, but New England probably was not.

The New England antislavery men to the contrary notwithstanding, there was plenty of reason for Polk and his cabinet to feel that discussions with Mexico might proceed in peace. In November Commander Conner of the Gulf Squadron sent word to Bancroft that conversations with certain Mexican officials led him to believe that a resumption of relations would be welcomed. Accordingly John Slidell went as minister from the United States to offer twenty-five millions for California, five millions for New Mexico, the assumption of claims against Mexico, and a settlement of the boundary question. "We are jogging along quietly this winter," Bancroft told Commodore Perry in early December, "not

anticipating war," and on the same day he wrote Commander Conner in Pensacola: "We all hope Mexico will agree to a peace; and we are well satisfied with the prudence and good judgment with which you have conducted your affairs. Pray keep the vessels so that we can constantly hear from Mr. Slidell without interruption." But as 1846 opened and the weeks went by, it was plain that Slidell's mission was destined to fail. Another way had to be found Polk had so far resigned the nation to war that he would have sent a message to Congress recommending precautions for the public defense had not Bancroft and John Y. Mason dissuaded him in a stormy cabinet session.

Meanwhile Taylor's "little army of occupation" drew near to trouble, for in a few weeks Taylor reached the banks of the Rio Grande to find a large Mexican force across the river. The Mexican commanding officer requested that Taylor fall back to the Nueces, the "true boundary." Taylor refused. The request was repeated, again refused, and the armies drew up on the opposite banks, facing each other. A clash was inevitable. On April 24 the Mexicans crossed the river and brushed with some American dragoons near Matamoros. The war had begun.

On Saturday, the 9th of May, Polk's cabinet met in session to hear the President, after reviewing the messages of the past four months from Slidell, conclude that in his opinion the United States had ample cause for a declaration of war. The cabinet, with the exception of Bancroft, agreed. What Polk said was true, admitted the Navy Secretary, but would it not be better to wait until some Mexican act of aggression cancelled all hope of peace? The meeting adjourned at two that afternoon with Bancroft still unconvinced. At six Taylor's message arrived with news of the clash at Matamoros, and when Polk called the cabinet together in the evening to read it, Bancroft gave his full approval to a declaration of war.

Early Sunday morning Bancroft and Polk began work on a war message, stopping for church at ten. In the early afternoon Buchanan came, and the three men wrote and revised until past two. The President and Bancroft worked on together until nearly six o'clock, when, after eleven hours of labor, the message was finished. Then Bancroft went to his own offices to begin the huge task of sending orders to the far-flung fleets and scattered army posts. On Tuesday, May 13, Polk sent his message to Congress — "War

exists, and notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself" — and the nation was officially at war.

Through Monday and Tuesday Bancroft worked without rest. On the 13th a note went to Commander Conner in the Gulf, ordering the immediate assumption of a tight blockade. To Commander Sloat in the Pacific off Mazatlan on the same day went his orders, written in triplicate and sent by three couriers taking different routes:

> The state of things alluded to in my letter of June 24, 1845, has occurred You will, therefore, now be governed by the instructions therein contained and carry into effect the orders then communicated with energy and promptitude

But before the orders reached Commander Sloat events in California were highly confused, for the impetuosity of Frémont had completely upset Bancroft's carefully laid plans for that territory's future. When Buchanan's message of October, 1845, reached Consul Larkin at Monterey, the courier, Lieutenant Gillespie of the Marine Corps, bore letters from Benton and oral instructions from Bancroft for Frémont, whose band of scouts was lingering near the California boundary. Frémont had already worked his way into California some weeks before, only to be ordered out by the suspicious Mexican General Castro, and when Gillespie made contact with him in late April of 1846, he reversed direction, and, acting as an officer of the United States Army and not as an explorer, led his men back into California, an act of war in itself some days before the actual declaration of war in May and a full month before the news of Taylor's clash at Matamoros reached the coast. The Mexican government in California, warned by Frémont's rash act, was therefore technically at war with the United States before Washington knew of any hostilities whatsoever Sloat at Mazatlan was completely puzzled, for no report of war had reached him, and Bancroft's note of October, as well as Buchanan's to Larkin, had stressed the necessity of proceeding cautiously in hopes of a peaceful settlement. Tentatively Sloat sent the sloop *Portsmouth* to San Francisco to reconnoiter, and kept it there, awaiting official notification from Bancroft. Consul Larkin was equally puzzled He had received no news of war.

Frémont himself was always vague on the matter. In later years he gave various reasons for his premature action — he had felt

war imminent, despite Bancroft's and Buchanan's conciliatory messages; he knew Polk's fear of the British fleet and its designs on California, and decided to act swiftly and decisively; the letter from Benton had told him to take and hold California "in the event of any occurrence"; and Bancroft's oral orders implied the same, although Bancroft subsequently said that his message was simply intended to make Frémont "acquainted with the state of affairs and the purposes of the government." Whatever his reason, all pretense of peaceful negotiation for California was shattered, and had not the Mexican troops and Taylor's dragoons started the actual war almost simultaneously a thousand miles away, Frémont might have lost California for the United States.

The resolute Polk, in the midst of approaching war with Mexico, did not deviate a hair's breadth from the course he had laid down for himself when he entered office. His original aims were still intact, with Walker handling the treasury and the tariff, and Buchanan and Bancroft the Texas and California problems. Only the Oregon boundary question remained to be settled, and for a year or more Polk had been casting about for a solution to the "Fifty-four forty or fight" dilemma the Democratic party had bequeathed him. The fifty-fourth parallel had always been unacceptable to the British prime minister Peel, and now war against England as well as Mexico, with California and Oregon vulnerable to seizure by the hovering British fleet, was out of the question. In 1845 it had seemed that the answer lay in the selection of a clever diplomat to settle the affair in London. Calhoun, offered the London post, declined. Bancroft, in May of 1845, sounded out Van Buren at Polk's behest, and received a flat refusal from his old friend. With the war with Mexico begun, Polk saw that settlement was vitally necessary, and in June, 1846, agreed to a boundary following the forty-ninth parallel. Bancroft read the terms of the treaty carefully and thought he detected a flaw; the line ran along the parallel "to the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's island, and thence southerly through the middle of said channel, and of Fuca's straits to the Pacific ocean." Navy charts, however, showed two channels, not one, and between them lay a group of islands whose possession could be disputed. He said nothing at the time, but had soundings taken and charts made which showed the deeper or main channel to be the western one, placing the islands on the American side of the line. It was

an unimportant matter in 1846, and no one suspected that the error in drafting the boundary would lead to a near-war some ten years later, or that the whole problem would be settled twenty-six years after by Bancroft himself in Berlin.

Frémont's personal war with Mexico in April and May of 1846 merely served to tangle the affairs of California more hopelessly than ever in Washington, where California was the Secretary of the Navy's particular problem, since there was no land army in the Pacific area. Commodore Sloat had his orders concerning the occupation of the territory from the previous year, and Bancroft expected that his urgent message of May 13, confirming the declaration of war, would simply mean that his instructions would be put immediately into operation But communication was slow and uncertain between Washington and the west coast, sometimes two or three months elapsing before messages reached California, and Sloat was an indecisive, sick man who had already asked for retirement. On the first of June he heard through Mexican sources of fighting near the Rio Grande, but having no positive declaration of war, he delayed a week. There was still no message On the 6th he asked Washington by courier for orders, and eventually, on the 8th, he sailed from Mazatlan for Monterey, reaching there July 2. In the meantime, on May 15, specific orders from Bancroft had left the capital — Sloat must take San Francisco without fail, occupy Mazatlan and Monterey, take Guaymas if it were defenseless, blockade as many other ports as feasible Commodore Biddle and the China Squadron would appear soon off Sonora, and the *Potomac* and the *Saratoga* from the Atlantic Squadron were on the way around the Horn. The Secretary's order continued:

> You will, as the opportunity offers, conciliate the confidence of the people in California, and also in Sonora, towards the government of the United States, and . encourage the people to neutrality, self-government, and friendship.

Slightly less than a month later, at the same time that Sloat's messenger was on his way eastward to ask for instructions, Bancroft dispatched another message to Sloat, explaining further the implications of his earlier ones:

> It is rumored that the province of California is well disposed to accede to friendly relations with the United States You will encourage the

people of that region to enter into relations of amity with our country. . . . You will take such measures as will best promote the attachment of the people of California to the United States, will advance their prosperity, and will make that vast region a desirable place of residence for emigrants from our soil.

"I hope California is now in our possession, never to be given up," Bancroft confidently wrote Samuel Hooper of Boston a week later. "We were driven reluctantly to war, we must make a solid peace; that shall open the far west to religious freedom, political rights, schools, commerce and industry The time will come when you may pass on railroads and steamers from Boston to San Francisco."

Bancroft's communications to Sloat made clear what had been Polk's plan from the beginning· to persuade California to secede, to set up a separate republican government, and finally to petition the Union for entrance; and on July 12 he outlined for Sloat the exact procedure to be followed in preparing California for statehood:

The [illegible]
tion [illegible]
the [illegible]
at that peace, the basis of *uti possidetis* should be established, the Government expects, through your forces, to be found in actual possession of Upper California. This will bring with it the necessity for a civil administration Such a government should be established under your protection, and in selecting persons to hold office respect should be had to the wishes of the people of California as well as to the actual possessors of authority in that province.

Well-laid though Bancroft's plans were, his messages never caught up with Commodore Sloat, who, after some hesitation, ran up the flag at Monterey on July 7 and claimed California for the United States. On the 9th he occupied San Francisco It was August 13 before Bancroft received news from the coast, and then it was Sloat's request for relief from his command because of illness On the same day the courier arrived with the Commodore's letter of June 6, asking for instructions The combination was too much for the Secretary, who, putting the two together, concluded that the ill and befogged commander had simply remained in Mazatlan in the face of all his messages and orders. A blazing letter went out

the same day bound for California. By his own admission Sloat was aware of the existence of hostilities in early June; why, then, had he not acted upon the previous orders of 1845 meant to cover the situation fully and exactly? "The Department willingly believes in the purity of your intentions," wrote Bancroft "But your anxiety not to do wrong has led you into a most unfortunate and unwarranted inactivity. . Surely there is no ambiguity in my language " The command of the naval forces in the Pacific could be turned over to Commodore Biddle, if the China Squadron had arrived, and if it had not, to Commodore Stockton, both of whom were to cooperate with General Kearny's forces then on the way overland It was an angry letter, and one which reflected precisely Bancroft's state of mind. He was weary of war and tired by the strain of constant cabinet meetings, correspondence, and worry He had never asked for a cabinet post, and he wanted desperately to return to the leisurely, satisfying task of continuing his long deferred historical writing Polk had originally promised him a diplomatic mission abroad, and when the last letter to the unfortunate Sloat was

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diplomatic corps, and in the fall of the year two openings in the foreign service gave Polk an opportunity to offer Bancroft his choice of the missions to London and Paris. Louis McLane, badly in need of a rest after the trying Oregon negotiations, was returning from London in October or November. Bancroft chose to replace him, for the British post seemed to Bancroft to carry considerably more prestige than that of Paris On September 9, after a talk with Bancroft and John Y. Mason, the President appointed him "envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to England." Bancroft's relinquishment of the Navy Secretaryship necessitated a reshuffling of the cabinet, which was quickly arranged, Mason of Virginia taking the Navy post, and Franklin Pierce replacing Mason as Attorney-General Almost exactly a month later, on October 10, George Bancroft, with his wife and children, took the steamer *Great Western* for Liverpool Secretary of State Buchanan gave him his orders and bade him goodbye:

The two most important objectives of your mission will be to have the duties on tobacco diminished, and to obtain a relaxation of the present

arrangement regulating our trade with the British West Indies and the American provinces I cannot suffer you to depart from the country without saying from the heart, God bless you! May your mission be prosperous and Mrs. Bancroft and yourself happy!

The crossing to London took sixteen days and twelve hours through severe gales, and when the *Great Western* reached Liverpool on the 26th of October, 1846, the entire Bancroft family found it necessary to pause at the Adelphi to recover. Bancroft and his daughter Louisa read Tacitus to each other while Mrs Bancroft took to her bed for four days, desperately seasick. "Of all horrors, of all physical miseries, tortures, and distresses," she wrote the two Bliss boys at home in Massachusetts, "a sea voyage is the greatest." It was the 30th before they were able to take a train to London, Mrs Bancroft being especially impressed by the comforts of British rail travel and the system of first-, second-, and third-class fares which made her "feel for the first time the superiority of England to our own country." Reaching London on the first of November, the family rested at Long's Hotel ("None of the bustle of the Astor," remarked Mrs Bancroft) while the minister's residence in New Bond Street was put in readiness. Two days later they moved into their new home and into the whirl of London court society

George Bancroft went to England with a chip on his shoulder. He had little love for the British people, and less sympathy for British politicians. His historical volumes had flayed them, and his Jacksonian-democratic politics were antagonistic to aristocracy, courts, and kings and queens, something which the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, knew perfectly well. The spirit in which the historian wrote his first letters from London was one of proud nationalism "The English people are already well aware of the rapid strides of America toward equality in commerce, manufacturing skill, and wealth," he told Polk. "They therefore look with dread on any series of events which tend to enlarge the sphere of American industry and possessions." His letters to Secretary Buchanan were in a similar vein: "Towards the United States the feeling is such as I have heretofore described to you. They do not love us; but they are compelled to respect us." But Bancroft had his weaknesses, an innately aristocratic temperament, a love of cultured society, a secret admiration for the pomp and glitter

of court life, and a natural, deep-seated disinclination to scream with the mob Nearly three years of court life, soft lights, shining glassware, good wines and better talk, mellowed him to the extent that when he took leave of London he admitted grudgingly that the experience had been "of immense advantage" to him.

Bancroft called on Palmerston on the 3rd of November to present his credentials, and the Foreign Secretary embarked on a campaign to win the new American envoy over. Palmerston could be devastatingly charming when he chose and Bancroft's visit found him at his best, witty, disarming, full of welcome and solicitude, with none of the condescension the Democrat from rural Massachusetts expected. What were Mr. Bancroft's impressions of Britain? Did he plan to continue his historical work? If he did, the files of the Empire were his for the asking Was Mr Bancroft familiar with court dress and manners? — "At Windsor we wear in the evening tight Pantaloons or shorts, and not loose trowzers." "Everywhere, Palmerston assured me, there prevailed the most friendly disposition toward the United States," the minister wrote Buchanan. As for the possibility of negotiating a trade treaty, he felt certain that Palmerston would be cooperative, he was already beginning work on a lowering of the tobacco duty After an hour's talk the American went home to New Bond Street with at least some of his suspicions of British politics allayed. The next day Lady Palmerston, Lord Melbourne's sister and no mean diplomat herself, broke social precedent by calling upon Mrs. Bancroft, much to that lady's excitement, and that evening, at dinner at Lord Holland's with Palmerston, Lords Morpeth, Mahon, and de Mauley, and the Archbishop of York, Bancroft began to feel that the life of a diplomat was well worth while.

Whatever her husband's prejudices might have been, Elizabeth Davis Bancroft from the outset was thrilled and dazzled by London life The company of brilliant lords and ladies fulfilled the dreams of schoolgirl days at Miss Cushing's Seminary for Girls at Hingham, and it was pleasant to find that diplomatic courtesy gave her, a plain New England lady, precedence over a marchioness She loved the glitter of social life and the procession of famous people that passed through her doors and at whose tables she sat. "I am *dazzled* by so many titled personages that I cannot remember half . . ," she wrote her envious friends in Boston. "I have the same interest in seeing the really distinguished men of England

that I should have in the pictures and statues of Rome, and indeed, much greater " At first her New England nature questioned the propriety of dining with bare arms and a low-cut dress, but she eventually decided that she might conform to the fashion, since the British aristocracy who set it seemed to be "people of agreeable manners, excellence, and the domestic virtues." Her voluminous letters to her friends at home bubbled with excitement; she floated, she said, ". . like one in a dream into the midst of persons and scenes that make my life seem more like a drama than a reality." But she could not get accustomed to "the London dinge," as she called it, and thought with housewifely candor that "some of the finest houses look to one as though I would like to give them a good scrubbing."

In three years of residence she never quite understood the British, despite her admiration for them. Her maid Russell frightened her with her British servant's hauteur She could never differentiate between the upper and under housemaids, and was constantly asking the wrong servant for coals or wine. Her husband put her to reading Whewell's *History of the Inductive Sciences* ". . . to become acquainted with the English mind, not only through society, but through its products in other ways; natural science is the department into which they seem to have thrown their intellect most effectively for the last ten or fifteen years." But she soon found Whewell dry and heavy. There were so many things to see and do. For a time London buzzed with her doings, for she never became fully accustomed to British reticence and reserve, and constantly embroiled herself in embarrassing situations through her good-humored outspokenness. At one dinner she inquired somewhat too loudly during a lull in the conversation as to the identity of "that brilliant talker" seated next to her, to find that it was Macaulay, and another of her well-meant conversations gave rise to one of the most quoted stories of contemporary society. She was perhaps the only woman in London who did not know that Lord Palmerston was the second husband of Lady Palmerston, generally understood to be the real father of the sons she bore while still the wife of his [illegible]

"Well, I am most astonished," replied the good lady, "that your

Ladyship does not see the most wonderful likeness in your second son to Lord Palmerston."

Puzzled at Lady Palmerston's cool reception of the remark, she put her hand on the boy's head, and looking admiringly at Palmerston, cried, "Ah, my lord, no one need ever ask who is this young gentleman's papa!" She never understood why Thomas Carlyle laughed, and no one ever informed her

The first two months of diplomatic society left the minister and his wife wonderfully impressed. In November alone their social calendar was staggering to contemplate — Mrs Bancroft attended eight *soirées*, they dined at the Admiralty with the Earl of Auckland, at Palmerston's, Lord Grey's, Lord Morpeth's, Lord John Russell's, Lord Mahon's, Dr. Holland's, with the Prussian minister Baron Parke, with the Duchess of Inverness, and Dean Milman. They spent two days at Windsor Castle, where they dined with the Queen, where Bancroft talked German with the Queen's mother, the Duchess of Kent, and where Mrs Bancroft was given two packs of cards, with which the Queen herself had played Patience, to send to her small niece in Boston. With Milman, Hallam, Macaulay, and Lord Mahon, Bancroft had "historical breakfasts" once a week In December they were guests of Chevalier Bunsen, an old friend of Bancroft's from his student days; they dined with Macready the actor; they met Babbage the mathematician, Thomas Carlyle, who "talked all dinnertime in his broad Scotch about James the First," and the witty Irish Lady Morgan, who made Mrs Bancroft laugh till she cried. Bancroft bought a court dress, complete with wine-colored skin-tight pantaloons, sword, and plumed chapeau. He bought a maroon coach with silver trim and the American eagle resplendent on the panels, while Mrs. Bancroft dressed the liveries in blue and red, with blue plush breeches, white silk stockings, and silver shoe-buckles for court days — a far cry from Minister Edward Everett's old yellow coach and single drably attired footman As the new year of 1847 opened there could be little doubt that the Bancrofts were enjoying themselves in the new world they had found in the old.

Despite the swift pace of London social life, Bancroft devoted himself with his characteristic energy to the task of discharging to the best of his abilities his duties as a diplomat. In many ways he was exceptionally well adapted to the assignment, for his keen mind, his wide reputation and circle of acquaintance, his aristo-

cratic manner and smooth tongue, combined with his lingering distrust of British politics, were valuable diplomatic qualities at St James's. His instructions from Buchanan, except for the specific aim of softening British restrictions on American trade with the West Indian colonies, were somewhat general, his primary purpose being to keep Washington informed of British and French internal problems and policies and particularly of the attitudes of those two nations toward the war with Mexico, for both Polk and Buchanan feared foreign intervention in the Texas-California affair in the event American arms showed signs of faltering.

The two months of dinners, receptions, breakfasts, and court appearances served not only as a method of extending Bancroft's acquaintance and of making his presence known, but as a valuable means of keeping his finger on the pulse of British opinion. In after-dinner conversations with Palmerston, Russell, Morpeth, and the rest, in purely learned discussions with Hallam and Macaulay and Carlyle, or particularly in assiduous reading of the British newspapers, much information was to be gained through channels not always open to the professional diplomat By January of 1847 Bancroft was able to report to Polk that British talk of intercession in Mexico ". . all amounts to nothing. England sees that California must be ours; and sees it with regret, but remains 'neutral.' . . . You may rely, I think, that the embarrassments of domestic affairs here, will forbid all British or French interference in Mexican affairs" When Polk's message to Congress concerning the Mexican war appeared in the London newspapers, said Bancroft, the British "set up a savage and incoherent growl," springing from "their consciousness of your success and of their own inability to interfere" "It was a hard lesson for England to learn," the minister concluded with satisfaction, "but she has learned it, that America means to go her own way." To Buchanan, Bancroft imparted his impressions of the British political leaders, with an especially discerning analysis of the Foreign Secretary:

> Lord Palmerston is, I think, not very strong in his hold on the public
> the old
> ng, and
> that international law, treaties, and interests of all sorts must yield to British pretensions. . . . Lord John Russell is, I think, more alive to the importance of preserving the most friendly relations with us; but I think Palmerston has a good deal of sore feeling about our Mexican

affair; and as he cannot interfere, is disposed to manifest in some way, that, after all, he has not been frightened by our American doctrine of non-interference.

The military successes of Winfield Scott in Mexico in the spring of 1847 convinced Bancroft definitely that there was nothing to fear from England. Scott took Vera Cruz in the last week of March, and when the news of the seaport's fall reached London in early May, Bancroft announced to Polk "a very great and decided change in the views of England with reference to our war with Mexico, to our finances, and generally to the position of the Administration and the country" Lord Ashburton exclaimed, when he met the American minister, "Now you are the lords of Mexico!" Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, could not understand how Scott took the castle of Vera Cruz so soon. Lord Clarendon, President of the Board of Trade, felt that the victory meant an early armistice: "You have been entirely successful I hope your sacrifice will lead to a peace." Even Palmerston changed his tune, "speaking in the very warmest language of . . the *immense superiority of the Anglo-Saxon* race as displayed in our great number of victories over the Mexicans" "They realize," said Bancroft, "that America is getting rich" As Scott's armies moved on, past the hard fighting of Cerro Gordo, Contreras, Churubusco, and Chapultepec, to the gates of the City of Mexico, the British attitude became increasingly friendly, and in October, a month before Mexico's fall, Bancroft was triumphantly certain that "We are now entirely beyond all danger of being interfered with injuriously."

After Walker's tariff-revision bill had squeezed through Congress at Polk's orders, Bancroft believed the time was ripe to follow Buchanan's instructions concerning the renovation of British-American trade agreements In 1846 Prime Minister Peel, securing the repeal of the [illegible]
the free-trade ideas [illegible]
nomic policy to a [illegible]
shortly, was still largely protectionist despite the accusations of the Whigs, but it lowered the bars enough not only to please the agricultural Northwest and South but enough to indicate that the trend of American economic policy was much the same as that of the British. "Nothing can exceed the interest taken here in the change in the British and American tariffs," Bancroft told Polk.

"They hang upon me as an oracle to hear how much Indian corn the valley of the Mississippi can produce." Accordingly Bancroft petitioned Palmerston:

> Should Her Majesty's Government be so inclined, the Undersigned is prepared, on the part of the American Government, to propose that British ships may trade from any port in the world, to any port in the United States, and be received, protected, and in respect to charges and duties, treated like American ships, if, reciprocally, American ships may in like manner trade from any port in the world to any port under the dominion of Her Britannic Majesty.

Palmerston seemed favorable to the idea, and agreed to begin the long procedure of framing a suitable bill, recruiting strength for it, and putting it before Parliament.

Affairs of diplomacy were not urgent enough, however, to deprive Bancroft of diversion, and throughout the year the minister and his wife were familiar figures in London society. In January they went to the opening of Parliament, Bancroft in his court dress with sword and chapeau, Mrs. Bancroft resplendent with a head-dress of green leaves, white fleur-de-lis, and ostrich plumes, a black velvet dress, and a diamond necklace, to hear the Queen read her speech to Parliament, while Lord Landsdowne held the crown on a cushion and the fierce old Duke of Wellington brandished the sword of state. In March a breathless Mrs. Bancroft was presented at court. "She was not at all frightened," her husband noted with some surprise. "She gathered up her train with as much self-possession as if alone." In general the year's calendar of social engagements remained much the same as before — dinner at some aristocratic table, acquaintance with some reigning lion, soirées, breakfasts, London gossip. When time permitted, they made short trips to places of interest, to Stoke Poges and to William Penn's monumentless grave in the old Quaker burying-ground, to [illegible]
They hearc [illegible]
the highly [illegible]
empire-builder and Rajah of savage Sarawak; and Alexander Kinglake, whose quiet shyness contrasted vividly with the rich, effervescent prose of his *Eothen;* and they became close friends with the aging Lady Byron. "I was curious to see her," Bancroft told his

sister Eliza, "as if to divine what divided her from her husband. . . . I found a person of gentleness of manner, full of feeling, sure to requite affection, perfectly well instructed, of an open, liberal mind . . . She cherishes the memory of Lord Byron as devotedly as any faithful and fond wife can." In November Emerson, on his second trip to Europe, came to call, bringing a breath of Massachusetts with him that gave Mrs Bancroft a twinge of

[illegible]

they left for New England and "lingered there longest — it was like a friend in a strange country." Even dinner with the Queen at Trinity College failed to call forth from her the excited superlatives of a year before.

Her husband, nevertheless, found the life of London intellectually stimulating The great men of British letters accepted him as one of their fraternity, and though his Anglophobic convictions regarding British diplomacy and politics remained substantially unchanged, he displayed none of them to his widening circle of literary friends The "historical breakfasts" continued, although the composition of the group might vary as prominent guests were invited to participate in what were probably the most brilliant conversations in England Babbage often came, Lyell the scientist, Kenyon, Bowring, Thackeray (whom Bancroft described with supreme understatement as "one of the writers for *Punch*"), the clever Monckton Milnes, and Sir Robert Peel, out of deference to whom Macaulay, his bitter enemy, avoided political discussion. Thomas Carlyle, a difficult man to know, became the American's friend Bancroft was, Carlyle told Emerson, "a tough Yankee man, of many worthy qualities more tough than musical . . . , with a certain small undercurrent of genial humor or as it were, ***hidden laughter,*** not noticed heretofore." Of them all, however, Macaulay struck Bancroft as the most extraordinary. "He has," he told Prescott, "the most nearly universal knowledge of any man I ever met. I think him, what is so rare, greater than his books. . . . I have met him in all sorts of companies, and everywhere he is the oracle of all present."

In such an atmosphere Bancroft continued his own historical work with revived energy. By the close of 1847 he had

from British files for his collection of documents relating to America more than 200 quarto and folio volumes, and his copyists were still at work daily in the State Paper Office and the British Museum gathering more. From France, where the national archives were opened to him, came every month bundles of material provided by Thiers, Guizot, and de Tocqueville. Finding himself without time to visit Holland, he hired a young man named Brodhead to search out and copy reams of Dutch papers, and similar copyists were busy in his behalf in the archives of Berlin and Madrid. The opportunity which presented itself staggered even Bancroft's mind; for the first time, through the advantages of his diplomatic position and his scholarly reputation, he stood able to collect every shred of evidence extant in Europe relating to American history. His own friends were ruthlessly exploited Eventually nearly every aristocrat of his acquaintance ransacked his attic for dusty records and family letters Lord Lansdowne brought precious folio after folio to him with his own hands, not trusting a messenger. The Earl of Dartmouth, as did Lord North's daughter and the Duke of Grafton, opened his family's correspondence to the American, and Sir George Grey allowed him the use of his priceless Penn papers. The true fire of scholarship burned brightly in Bancroft's heart, and moments snatched from diplomacy and correspondence were spent in feverish activity. When he left England, after a scant three years of residence, he took with him in his boxes of papers the most complete collection of original source materials that any American historian of his time possessed, the foundation upon which was built the great structure of his histories. "His heart is full of manuscripts," his wife said, and she accused him humorously of "making up to the ladies to see what papers her family has in the garret, and if they have none, moving on to the next."

Since the observation of French affairs fell within his diplomatic province, Bancroft initiated in 1847 the regular practice of spending two winter months and occasionally a month each spring in Paris, gleaning information that might be of value to Buchanan's State Department. While not an incompetent diplomat, Richard Rush, the minister to Paris, could neither read, write, nor speak French, and someone of Bancroft's caliber was urgently needed there to find and transmit to Washington the gossip of French politics In March of that year he crossed the channel to remain for a month in a nation that, while outwardly calm, rocked internally

with the first tremors of the revolution that was to detonate less than a year later. The proud and arbitrary Louis Philippe, unwittingly enjoying the contempt of half his nation, ruled a country that possessed national unity, parliamentary institutions, self-expression — all the things that other nations in Europe fought to obtain — and yet was on the eve of revolt "Do you not feel a breath of revolution in the air?" asked the great political scientist de Tocqueville, but neither Louis nor his minister Guizot, a historian who could not see the lessons of history under his nose, realized in 1847 that sentiment against their bourgeois government was gathering slowly and powerfully, that the lesser bourgeoisie and the working classes, excluded from the franchise and the government by a qualifying tax, were soon to dethrone the one and jettison the other

That spring, however, there was little that was specific for Bancroft to report Louis granted him a short audience at the Tuileries at half-past eight on the morning of April 1, but the interview was somewhat unsatisfactory. France, said Louis, would ride out any storms she might encounter, and Palmerston (he mentioned the name with a sneer, Bancroft noted) could be assured that Louis wanted no conquests at present, no Spain, Belgium, or Savoy. The sharp-eyed American saw through the shallow, arrogant ruler at once "I would not give two straws," he said, "for his chance of a future career." Louis was toying with Spanish affairs, with the design of engineering a marriage between Montpensier and the Infanta, joining his own and the Castilian royal house. Palmerston and Victoria were angry, the *entente cordiale* nearly dead, the body of the Treaty of Utrecht exhumed, said Bancroft, "to frighten fools with." From within and without, through Louis Philippe's clumsy handling of national and foreign affairs, his government was proceeding under difficulties. "The breach of friendship between the ministries of France and England," Bancroft reported confidentially to Buchanan, "is much greater than it appears on the surface."

For the most part, Bancroft used his time in Paris in renewing old acquaintances, making new ones, and observing the social life of the capital he had visited as a young man some twenty years before. There were many people to see and much to do. He must see, of course, the French historians, and his first call was upon Guizot, who, he discovered, preferred to pronounce his name *Gwizot* in

the Italian fashion. The two scholars, each peerless in his own field of history, chatted for nearly two hours, of the French and American Revolutions, of the influence of French thought in the shaping of American ideals, of Calvin and his French followers, of French aid to America during the War for Independence, of Lafayette (whom both men had known). Best of all, Guizot not only threw open to Bancroft for his historical work all the resources of France, but promised to assign several young men immediately to the task of copying documents, all at no cost, in contrast to the fixed charge customary at the British Foreign Office. From Lamartine, later to write the history of the revolutionary years, he gathered scraps of evidence that confirmed what he already suspected, that Louis Philippe's authority was none too secure. Thiers welcomed him, and before he departed from a long and pleasant conversation, showed him several closets filled with documents to which the American was made welcome. He wished especially to talk with Victor Cousin, but when he saw the old philosopher he was in the midst of a heated argument with his bookbinder and could spare little time. Old Chateaubriand, crotchety and stiff, refused to see anybody. He was dying and did not care. "In my youth," he said, "I saw Washington and Malesherbes; in my old age I see Louis Philippe and Dupin. Can you wonder I wish to continue no longer?" He called on George Sumner, the younger brother of his friend Charles, on Lamennais, and Madame de Circourt, talked with Hawtrey (the headmaster of Eton) about boys and schools, and before he returned to London he saw the great tragedienne Rachel in *Andromaque,* filling an entire page of a letter to his wife with praise of her performance.

Seven months later, in late December, he was back in Paris once more. This time the murmurs of revolt were louder. Louis and Guizot were under fire; Lamartine told Bancroft that the state of France was serious, Thiers, Louis Blanc, and Odilon Barrot emphasized the dangers. He met Dominique Arago, who was in a few weeks to be Minister of War in the New Provisional Government, a man over six feet tall, dark and majestic, "the very man in a revolution to command an impassioned crowd." Mignet made his heart "leap for joy" by taking him to the archives of the French Depart-
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a Corresponding Member in the History section of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, the first American to be so honored, and with Prescott one of the only two during his time. In January, 1848, Bancroft returned to London. A month later the rioting in Paris began, street barricades went up in city after city through the nation, and the spark was kindled that set all Europe alight in the year of revolutions.

1848 was a year that should have been a turning-point in history, but one at which history failed to turn. The months of February and March, when France flamed with revolt, were a prelude to the series of smaller blazes that broke out through Europe — in Austria, in Germany, in Italy, in Denmark and Poland — which might have transformed the continent overnight The despotic governments, when attacked by the revolutionaries, escaped disintegration by these explosive internal forces by counterattacks, by granting concessions to the attackers, and by a clever capitalization of the lack of wisdom, experience, and cooperation between revolutionary leaders and elements In Austria the Magyars under Kossuth rose and fell in less than a year In Germany and Italy, in Poland and Denmark, the abortive attempts to gain free and unified governments flared briefly and died. After a few rumblings the storm passed England by. The land was fairly prosperous, the people pious and self-satisfied, and when Macaulay's history of the nation appeared, it expressed exactly the British trust in Palmerston's "middle way" policy of avoiding embroilment in the continental disorders. In France the revolt hit hardest and lasted longest, though in the end it too came to naught. When the reports reached London and the pattern of events became clearer Bancroft felt the new spirit surging through Europe The people were rising in their power, the common men in whom he had always placed his trust had taken another step forward in the divinely ordered march toward universal freedom. Monarchy and tyranny seemed forever doomed.

He greeted the news from Europe with elation. In the fateful month of March he sent a ninety-page dispatch to Washington, explaining the entire background of the revolutionary movement and pointing out with pride that "the American republic is the inspiring example, of which the influence has been long preparing radical changes in every government." "The aristocracy," he . "are overwhelmed with gloom In the court circle

one to speak and think of the French Republic with hope, with subdued exaltation, with trust. . . " With concealed pleasure he and his wife discussed the European revolts with Disraeli, who was certain that the liberal movements on foot in Europe meant "the ultimate and complete dissolution of European civilization," and he exhorted Buchanan and the State Department to bend their efforts toward keeping the pot boiling America, after all, by its own revolution, had fired the first gun in the people's struggle for worldwide freedom, and it would ill befit the nation with the longest tradition of freedom to fail to assist in its consummation. "Is the country rousing itself for sound principles?" he asked the Secretary of State. "Has the echo of American democracy which you now hear from France and Austria and Prussia and all old Germany no power to stir up the heart of the American people . . . ? Can we show ourselves lukewarm, while the Old World is shaking off its chains and emancipating and enthroning the masses?"

"Here," said Bancroft to Edward Everett, "there is consternation. The high aristocracy dread the future." The winds from Europe blew strongly on England during the revolutionary months. The minister reported to Washington that there were riots in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, and London, and that Smith O'Brien was on his way to Ireland to foment insurrection, "eager for power and willing to be a martyr" On April 10, the day of the Great Chartist meeting, he took a drive with his wife through the still, deserted city to see the constables scouring the streets and to watch a train of artillery rumble into London, but Bancroft knew that England would ride out the storm. The upper middle class remained solidly conservative, and "without that class no great changes can ever be made," he told Polk:

> This country, in the midst of all the revolutions around it, is as full of apathy as possible There is no movement; no cracking of the fabric: no rending of the wall. And yet there is a deep foreboding of the future. . . .

England's time, however, would come. "Aristocracy is entrenched apparently beyond the reach of assailants," he wrote Prescott. "You will see, after many days, the bread come back to be eaten here. . . . There will be not a crown left in Europe in twenty years.

except in Russia." In 1848 everything he had said fourteen years before in *The Office of the People* and in his *History* about the power of the democratic spirit seemed to be coming true. "Europe is in a dismal state," he summed it up to young William Bliss, "and nothing but the recognition of the power of the people can save it."

Bancroft hurried across the channel in late April to watch the formation of the French Republic. Paris was seething, fresh-faced boys of the new *garde mobile* swarming the streets in their blue frocks, the boulevards noisy with the cries of urchins selling newspapers. After leaving his cards with the ministers, he searched out his friends, reconstructing from their conversations the events of the past two months The King was penniless, the Queen "driven out without a change of linen, *pas une chemise*," Louis' son, the Duc de Nemours, did not even have a pair of slippers — "The whole family is a troop of beggars . . . They have nothing but eyes for tears" Everywhere, reported Bancroft, the proposed Republic was greeted with enthusiasm. "The bourgeoisie have recovered courage and like the Republic . Those who liked Louis Philippe most did so as the representative of order and security; and as he failed they own themselves mistaken and go heartily for the republic. . . . A republic or an abyss, no other choice, a republic or civil war; a republic or the ruin of France." But the world need not fear for France, he added. The new government would be a worthy one, formed without heat or violence, for "The conquest of liberty has calmed passion. . . . The coming republic will be under the safeguard of the organized people, and not at the mercy of a mob"

On April 22, the day before the elections, Bancroft reported that preparations for balloting were quiet and unimpassioned. There seemed to be less activity than that attendant on an American election: "There is no extreme excitement, but rather the universal desire of getting a good assembly." His friend Lamartine assured him "warmly and most explicitly . . . that all interests shall be respected and secured" D'Argout, president of the Bank, pledged that "the credit of France is to be maintained and the interests of industry respected." Mignet, Thiers' friend, warned him not to expect miracles, that the French were unused to self-government. Adolphe Crémieux, Minister of Justice, and Lamartine, Minister of Foreign Affairs, questioned him closely about the Constitution of the United States, since the Provisional Gc

ment was preparing one of its own "A constitution should be the representation of the national character," he told them. "To translate ours into French is not enough."

Though confident of the wisdom of the French and of their leaders, Bancroft had but one fear, that the form of government they chose might be too simple. The old French opinion, that of Turgot, favored a single legislative chamber, and the idea of a Senate found little favor with the constitution-makers. Foreseeing future political stalemates, Bancroft pointed out to Victor Cousin that "a president *vis-à-vis* one chamber will occupy a difficult position." The whole revolution, however, seemed to be finished and successful, and he returned to London with great hopes for France's future, certain that its only difficulties would come from temporary defects in the organization of the government, "consequent on the want of republican experience."

In England Bancroft's life proceeded much as before, his time divided among work in the archives, diplomatic duties, and social life. Emerson visited him in London in February and March, and at his home met many of the great men he wished to see — Chevalier Bunsen, Dean Milman, Sir William Molesworth, Macaulay, Lord Morpeth, Lyell, Monckton Milnes (who had just reviewed his work in *Blackwood's*), and others Bancroft secured him admission to both houses of Parliament, Mrs. Bancroft gave him a card to one of Lady Morgan's *soirèes*, and when he left for Paris the minister gave him letters of introduction with which to pave his way in French society.

In July both Bancroft and his wife felt the need of relaxation, especially since Mrs. Bancroft's health, weakened by the strain of constant social activity, was not all that it should be, and they left London for a tour in Yorkshire, in a special private car provided by Hudson, the railway king. After two weeks they extended their time to include a trip to Scotland, which Bancroft had long wanted to visit. They went to Hawthornden, the home of the seventeenth century poet William Drummond, and visited Jeffrey at Craigcrook. The old lion of the *Edinburgh Review*, before whom all literary England had once trembled, was now in his seventies, but his eyes still flashed and his tongue was still sharp. Jeffrey had much to say of Prescott, whose historical work he admired; and Empson, his son-in-law and editor of the *Review*, the palsied philosopher Hamilton, and the minor poet Wilson, made Bancroft's

stay at Craigcrook a profitable one, "as full of fun and cheerful talk as the hours could be." They met the proud Scottish lords who seemed so vividly unlike the British aristocrats — Athol, Macdougal, Bredalbane, Buccleach — and made the sightseeing tour of Kelso, Kenmore, the Birches of Aberfeldy, Glen Lyon, Lock Tay, the fall of Moness, Dryburgh Abbey, Melrose, and Abbotsford, home of the great Scottish writer who had befriended the historian in Paris some twenty years before The site of the house was not beautiful, "a river-bank and nothing more," but Bancroft thought the castle itself architecturally a work of art. To pass through the pleasant sitting-room where *Ivanhoe* was written, or to see the salon in which Scott opened the window that he might hear the rippling of the Tweed in his death agony, affected Bancroft deeply. "I return from Scotland," he wrote Prescott, "a greater admirer of Scott." Turning south through the lake country, he stopped at Kendal to cross the hills to Wordsworth's home at Rydal Mount, spending the night with the old poet and Dorothy before leaving for Fox Howe to visit Harriet Martineau As the month of August drew to a close they reached London again, where John and Eliza Davis were waiting to see them

For the first time since his arrival in England, Bancroft, after his return to London from Scotland, felt his energy flagging. His diplomatic duties had been numerous and wearisome and his constant labors on his historical collections had drained his strength. Nearing fifty, he was in excellent health, but he had no longer the resiliency of his youth that made fourteen hours' daily work easy for him Frankly, too, he was somewhat tired of court life, nobles, and aristocracy "I begin to sigh a little for republican air," he wrote Prescott, "and for the homely sincerity of American life and rough vigor of our institutions and people I do not intend to remain here a great while longer. It is a pleasant life, very; for a season or so it is instructive, then it might enfeeble " It was perhaps fortunate that he felt the way he did, for in the United States it was a presidential election year.

The campaign and election of 1848 provided an excellent example of the strange dilemmas into which American political parties have often forced themselves by failing to observe the issues important to the voters. The Mexican War had been concluded successfully by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in February of 1848, and the resultant acquisition of new territory, ready to be

absorbed into the Union, brought up once more in an election year the politically embarrassing question of slavery. Many Northerners were firmly convinced that the war had been fought for the express purpose of extending the institution and were equally determined to keep the new territories free, while many Southerners believed that the Constitution guaranteed property, that slaves were property, that it was the right of any citizen to take slaves wherever he wished, and that it was the duty of the national government to protect them there. The extension of slavery into the Southwest and West was actually the sole issue of the campaign, and both Whigs and Democrats ignored it. The Democrats nominated Lewis Cass of Michigan at a convention which emphatically refused to make any declaration regarding slavery in the territories. The Whigs chose General Zachary Taylor, who prudently kept quiet. Thus the nation was presented with the spectacle of the Democratic party, predominantly Southern in strength, pinning its hopes on a Northern nominee, and the Whigs, many of whom opposed the extension of slaveholding, choosing Taylor, who refused to say anything about the matter and who owned three hundred slaves himself Naturally the attempt to snuff out the slavery issue proved immediately unsuccessful, resulting in a third party movement which, stemming from the Northern Democrats' old nemesis, the Liberty party, gathered in disgruntled Whigs and Democrats alike to form the Free Soil party, nominating Martin Van Buren, whose anti-annexationist stand four years before now paid dividends.

To Bancroft, far from the political arena, the campaign seemed very distant Secretary of State Buchanan, and occasionally Polk, kept him informed of the progress of Cass's campaign, their optimistic reports convincing him that the party stood little chance of failure. The choice of Cass seemed to him a wise one, for he believed him to be the candidate most likely to preserve the unity between North and South. As for abolition, with him the Union came first, no matter how much he disliked the institution of slavery. It was a question not for parties, but for the nation to decide. "The Union must be preserved," he wrote his stepson William:

> I love the principle of popular power that lies at the bottom of our institutions and I love the Union. . . . So I would decide questions relating



GEORGE BANCROFT IN HIS FORTIES



JAMES KNOX POLK

to slavery by appeals to the collective judgment of the nation, and not by a local party organization.

As for his old friend Van Buren, Bancroft had no sympathy for his defection from the party ranks "You know how ardently I supported Van Buren while he was true to himself," he wrote Prescott, "but I cannot support him now"

The result of the November elections, with Cass going down to defeat before Taylor, surprised and shocked Bancroft, who ascribed the failure of his party directly to Van Buren's treason, for "Little Van" polled 300,000 votes, enough to tip the scales in eleven states. He did not need Buchanan's letter to inform him that his record and reputation were not enough to save him from the imminent Whig housecleaning "There are several gentlemen anxious to obtain your place," the Secretary of State warned. "Indeed from present experiences there will be a fiercer scramble for spoils than at the commencement of General Harrison's administration." "Now what is to be done?" Bancroft replied "Shall I resign? Shall I wait? How are matters coming? What prospect of the reorganization of our party?"

It was especially inconvenient to be plagued by uncertainty precisely when two years of labor were beginning to show fruit. A treaty regulating postal rates between Britain and the United States, his first diplomatic success, had recently been negotiated, ratified by the Senate in January of 1849 But most important to Bancroft was the fact that the success of the commercial agreements discussed with Palmerston in 1846 and 1847 was in sight Palmerston's bill, which he and the American had framed, was on the verge of being presented to Parliament. Lord Lyndhurst assured Bancroft that it would pass the House of Lords, and Lords Beaumont and Landsdowne agreed In effect, in return for repeal of certain trade restrictions allowing the British to engage in American coastwise commerce, the agreement promised a share of the rich West Indian trade to American ships. The bill represented months of preparation and persuasion on Bancroft's part, and was to serve as the triumphant finale to his first diplomatic mission. Sure that he was soon to be displaced by a Whig favorite, he intended to arrange the passage of the bill, present the final draft to the United States, point out its advantages, and then, after its acceptance by the Senate, retire from his post in a burst of glory.

The desire to see the successful conclusion of the treaty he had labored diligently to procure was a primary factor in his refusal to resign his ministership immediately following Taylor's election. To John Davis he wrote in February of 1849:

> I have not sent forward a resignation. I am well aware of the strong desire of many to have my place but I displaced no one. I refused to displace anyone· and I have not yet finished the objects for which I accepted this post. When those are finished, my own wishes and the objects of my life will lead me home.

He had expressed, of course, two months before Taylor's victory, the intention of returning to America when he completed his business abroad, and quite truthfully he repeated the statement later: "If my enemies think to do me a harm by obtaining my recall, they will find themselves mightily mistaken. Had Cass been elected I should have remained here a certain number of months, and then, from love of letters, have resigned a post in which I have very nearly been long enough " He had gathered nearly all of the historical material that Europe had to offer and now he felt the urge to use it. "I am getting on in life," he said. "I must write the history of the Revolution before life ebbs." It was next to impossible to write in London, he complained to Prescott, and he had accomplished little in the way of actual composition. "So I shall return," he continued. ". . . pitch my tent in New York, and when I get my papers completed, and nicely bound with gilt edges at top and nice gilt backs, I shall snap my fingers at the whole of your Whig party." The worst that his Whig enemies could do, then, was to recall him before he was ready to resign voluntarily, and thus to rob him of the satisfaction of completing his trade treaty.

In the early months of 1849, with the trade bill due to pass Parliament shortly, Bancroft was fearful that the Whigs meant to do exactly that. "Mr Bancroft is expected to resign and to be home during the summer," crowed the Whig *Express* in New York. "His free-trade correspondence with the British government has received a quietus." He had no idea who Taylor's choice to replace Buchanan as Secretary of State might be, nor any reason to believe that either Taylor or Buchanan's successor would enjoy seeing a Democratic appointee of Polk's gathering plaudits for a successful diplomatic *coup*. "I want nothing but to return with the credit .

that properly belongs to me," he assured his brother-in-law. "Surely the President . . . will not withhold from such successful exertions that just approbation to which they may be entitled . . I know not why the President should wish to injure me." Furthermore, mercantile interests in Parliament began to ask embarrassing questions. Could Bancroft guarantee that if the bill passed, the American Congress would agree to its half of the proposed concessions? After all, the political situation had changed, and did Bancroft speak with the same authority for Taylor and his Whigs as he had for Polk and Buchanan? In desperation Bancroft wrote in February to John Davis, whose standing in the Whig party gave him more than a little influence in Washington; could Davis persuade Taylor, or any prominent Whig, to write him a goodwill letter that he might display in London? Success was very nearly within his grasp (the bill, drawn up in final form by Lord John Russell, Labouchere, and Bernal, had already been ordered printed by the House of Commons), and the merest whisper of support from Washington would make its passage certain

The request to Davis was useless, for Bancroft was high on the Whig list of proscriptions and neither Davis nor any other friend could have obtained support for the politically orphaned diplomat. The ship-owners of New England, holding a virtual monopoly upon American coastwise trade, saw no benefit in the bill, and the new Secretary of State, Clayton, who replaced Buchanan in March of 1849, curtly told Bancroft to drop the whole affair. A few days later, on March 12, Daniel Webster rose in the Senate to introduce a resolution calling for information from the President on Bancroft's authority to arrange for such a proposed loosening of trade restrictions in American waters. "All must agree," Webster said, "that the subject is vastly important." He concluded pontifically:

> And I confess that I was a little startled to find that the American minister, who is now remaining in England, has, at the present moment, and under existing circumstances, offered to act immediately in a proposition for a convention to throw open the whole coasting trade of the United States freely, and without discrimination, to British vessels.

The British reaction to Webster's resolution was instantaneous, and Bancroft saw more than two years' labor go glimmering. "I could have had the whole British colonial trade and the indirect

trade opened to our ships by the first day of September next," h wrote Davis in anguish. "If I were with you I could give you thousand reasons why the President should sustain me." But i America there was no one to defend him and his motives. Web ster's "surprise," his implication that Bancroft had without author ity initiated agreements disadvantageous to American interests provided excellent material for the Whig press, and in Massachu setts the Whigs made particularly good use of it. Webster's insinua tion was of course perfectly untrue, and Webster should hav realized it if he did not at the time Bancroft had acted upor written orders from his superior, Secretary of State Buchanan beginning his negotiations in 1846 and receiving no order fron Clayton to desist until very nearly the day of Webster's attack. H explained to John Davis·

I hope you don't believe a word of the nonsense in the American paper about my having exceeded my instructions or acted without them. I had full authority for all I have done And I hope you don't think I would embarrass the administration

Bancroft knew that a defense of his actions was useless. Any thing he might say or do would be treated by the Whig press simply as the self-justification of a guilty and superseded Demo crat, for superseded he was in May. Taylor chose a wealthy Boston manufacturer, Abbott Lawrence, as his successor, condescendingly adding to the formal notice a note to the effect that, if he wished, Mr. Bancroft might remain until October, for Lawrence had per sonal business to dispose of Accustomed as he was to the spoils system, the deposed diplomat felt that the Whigs had in his case gone too far. He had made it known that he intended to quit his post long before Taylor's election or Webster's attack, and the least Taylor could have done, he believed, was to have followed the customary practice of notifying him privately of Lawrence's appointment so that he could have resigned before being publicly dismissed. Angrily he told John Davis:

Had he treated me as any one of his predecessors would have done, I could have resigned with honour and satisfaction Would it not be ridiculous for me to resign when I am already superseded? The ad ministration does not act frankly.

His brief career in the foreign service was ending on an unpleasant note, but he had the last word. In August he reviewed for Clayton's benefit the whole history of his attempt to obtain modification of the trade laws, and concluded, in words that must have made the Secretary wince:

> it is concluded, and well concluded, in order to see if any minute during its progress some plausible ground may be discovered for cavil Impartial men will pronounce your review to be neither generous nor ingenuous, neither timely nor just.

Instead of a triumphant homecoming with a record of successful diplomacy behind him, he faced return as a superseded and suspected failure.

One last bit of business remained before preparing for departure Great Britain, in the process of gaining a foothold in Central America and with designs on a possible canal route, had seized some Isthmian territory from Nicaragua and Honduras, forming an alliance with the Mosquito Indians. On the basis of this somewhat specious alliance the British claimed the right, as "ally and protector of the King of the Mosquitoes," to control or fortify the strategic San Juan de Nicaragua river. It being clear to Secretary of State Clayton that Britain's next step would be toward the seizure of San Salvador, Honduras, and all of Nicaragua, he accordingly instructed Bancroft on May 2 to question Palmerston about British intentions Bancroft should imply to Palmerston, Clayton suggested, that if the river were to become a canal and a world highway, it would be inexpedient for one nation to control it The United States, Bancroft told the Foreign Secretary, did not recognize the Mosquito Indians as a political entity, and any British-Mosquito alliance was therefore void. Even if such an alliance were valid, the Nicaraguan government and not the Mosquitoes had jurisdiction over the San Juan river. Further, granting that the Indians did have jurisdiction over the river, Britain still had no right to fortify it. Palmerston refused to make any commitments. "We want no further territory," he told Bancroft. "You know very well we have colonies enough." Commerce on the river, he assured the American, would be handled "in the best interests

of both the United States and Britain." But Palmerston gave no assurance of British withdrawal. The interview was highly unsatisfactory, but it was Lawrence's place to continue the discussion and Bancroft left it, at Clayton's orders, to him.

There were many things to do in the few short months of British residence which remained. Eliza's son, John Chandler Bancroft Davis, arrived for a visit. Two quick trips to Paris, in April and August, sufficed to collect scattered bits of historical source material and to make the last reports on the foundering French Republic. A round of farewell dinners filled the remaining weeks. Mrs. Macready, the wife of the actor (her husband was in New York, where the bloody riots growing out of his rivalry with the American Shakesperean actor Forrest were soon to occur) entertained the departing minister and his wife, with a distinguished list of guests attending. The Duke of Argyll, Dickens, Hallam, Milman, Bunsen, and Macaulay met with him in May for one of the last "historical breakfasts," and Macaulay gave him a farewell banquet at the Albany. Prescott's son, travelling in Europe, stopped in, and young Sumner came to say goodbye. At Oxford, on June 21, he stood before the university in scarlet gown and round velvet cap to receive the degree of Doctor of Civil Law, *Honoris Causa*, his second honorary degree But by late summer he had made his farewells, welcomed his children (John, Louisa, and George) back from school in Switzerland, and had safely packed away in dozens of boxes the priceless collection of manuscripts and notes for which he had ransacked Europe. Lawrence would not arrive until October, but as a last proud gesture Bancroft left in August, refusing to wait in the customary gesture to welcome his successor and leaving young Davis as Secretary of the Legation to handle affairs until the Boston merchant's arrival.

Balancing his diplomatic accounts, Bancroft decided that he had discharged his duties to his own satisfaction, and that his promise to Buchanan had been kept, he had reported, faithfully and in detail, the effect on public opinion in Europe of the Mexican War, kept watch of the revolutions of 1848, negotiated a successful postal treaty with Great Britain and begun one with France, protested against British policy in Central America, worked for the ill-fated but nearly successful tariff and trade agreements, and had given full and constant information to the State Department on the policies and problems of British internal and foreign affairs. Most

of all he had, by his deportment and the example of his honesty, ability, learning, and sincerity, left with the British the best possible impression of the caliber of American diplomacy and statesmanship. Whatever the Whigs might say, he had been a credit to the foreign service, a fit successor to Edward Everett. He had profited personally by his experiences as well Much of the old provincialism and many of the prejudices had disappeared; he was a polished, cosmopolitan gentleman, accustomed to move with ease in any aristocratic circle. He wrote, on the eve of his departure, "To have resided here has been a distinct advantage. The constant enjoyment of the most refined and cultured society, the change of scene, the opportunity of observing statesmen and institutions, lords, commoners and ministers, have at once instructed me and have soothed and benefitted me, when I most needed it." The great men of England and France had met him, judged him, and accepted him as an equal. Yet he was eager to see America again. There was history to be written, and the great classic drama of the Revolution began to unfold in his mind as he watched the cliffs of Lands End fade into the horizon behind him.

CHAPTER SIX

The People's Historian
1849–1860

BANCROFT chose New York City as his home upon his return from England His ties with Boston had never been strong, his friends in that New England city few, and his political affiliations hardly calculated to increase them. Boston had been to him simply the political capital of Massachusetts, and with his career in active politics definitely closed, there was no great reason to return to it. After London, New York possessed more of the urbane and cosmopolitan flavor of living to which he had become accustomed during his years of foreign residence. The metropolis, less than 400,000 in 1849, was growing rapidly, and was due to double its size and more by 1860 as its importance as a port grew and as the empty wharves of Massachusetts rotted away. Near the waterfront immigrants crowded the streets — Irish, Italians, Scotch, Scandinavians, multitudes of settlers from the constant flow of ships, but primarily the Irish, thousands of them from the hunger-ravaged counties of Erin. The appearance of the city was rapidly changing. New stores and office buildings rose monthly. The disastrous fire of 1835 had razed most of the wooden houses, and now New York was a city of brick and stone, solid, prosperous, and substantial. Ferries plied the rivers and harbors, puffing locomotives tinged the air with smoke along the Hudson. Public ward schools opened in the forties, a park system was laid out in the fifties, and soon a tax-supported police force appeared. The buzz and bustle of this city provided a contrast to quiet and orderly Boston, and Bancroft liked it, although he was prone to say with New England pride that New York was a city of social climbers and money-grubbers, with not a real scholar in the lot of them.

The Bancroft family arrived in New York in November of 1849 and moved to a temporary residence at 32 West 23rd Street while negotiations for the purchase of a permanent home were under way. The passage of a few months found them settled at 17 West 21st Street, in the old "Love Lane" district on the bounds of Greenwich, where they made their home for twenty years, and shortly after the purchase of the 21st Street home they bought a summer country place at Newport, Rhode Island Only Mrs. Bancroft, Louisa, and the historian remained at home, for John Chandler and young George registered at Harvard and left immediately. The two Bliss boys, now young men, resided in Boston. Bancroft's orphaned nephew, Bancroft Gherardi, he placed in Annapolis, and for the first time since the appearance of his first published volumes, he found that he had no pressing responsibilities other than the continuance of his narrative of the American past It had been almost ten years since the publication of Volume III, which carried the narrative to the opening of the Revolution, and he renewed the task of finishing his plan of completing it to "the present time." The boxes of documents and transcripts which accompanied him from London contained the evidence; his work now lay in giving life to these dry bones of fact He had nearly everything he needed — he told James Wynne in 1852 that upon his return from England he had made himself practically independent of external historical aid by systematically combing Europe and America for every bit of evidence bearing on his work — and what he did not have he could obtain from his copyists in the State Paper Office in London, his agents on the continent, or from private collections. His library covered the entire third floor of his house, books piled in corners and on the floor, papers spilling over into the wide halls. He began his writing at dawn and kept at it until the early afternoon The rest of the day he spent in horseback riding through the parks — a habit that lasted the rest of his life — and the evening he saved for reading, writing, and attending social events. There was a strong literary clique in New York — Irving, Bryant, Halleck, N P. Willis, Verplanck, and others — and Bancroft found plenty of opportunity to indulge in the leisurely dinners, enlivened by good food and talk, that he enjoyed. There was often a visiting dignitary, such as Thackeray or Cobden, to welcome, and numerous banquets, at which Bancroft was a familiar figure at the speakers' table; there were plays, concerts at the Acad-

emy of Music, balls, and receptions. In the early afternoon the smartly rapping hooves of fast trotters resounded along Bloomingdale Road and Harlem Lane as the wealthy bankers, publishers, and railroad men matched horses, and in the evening, in the great homes of the merchant aristocracy near Washington Square and farther uptown, the predecessors to the four hundred provided social diversion. Sunday evening, however, was always an "at home" for the Bancrofts, a practice learned from the Göttingen scholars.

For the first time since the beginning of his work Bancroft found, in the year of his return from London, a rival in the field of American history. Richard Hildreth of Boston, the son of Bancroft's old master at Phillips-Exeter and a Harvard graduate of the class of 1826, published in 1849 *The History of the United States from the Discovery of the Continent to the Organization of Government under the Federal Constitution*, a three-volume work aimed to present the founding fathers "unbedaubed with patriotic rouge, wrapped up in no fine-spun cloaks of excuses and apology . . . , in their own proper persons." "Of centennial sermons and Fourth-of-July orations, whether professedly such or in the guise of history," wrote Hildreth, "there are more than enough." Striking scornfully at that type of history which "seeks to bask in the sunshine of national vanity," he promised to relate "plain facts in plain English" The inference of his remarks was clear enough, and made particularly so by his boast that "no other work on American history, except mere compends and abridgements, embraces the same extent of time."

Hildreth wrote American history admittedly as Bancroft's rival, as an antidote to the elder man's effulgent, flowing narrative and his dramatic presentation of events. It was competent work, hard-headed matter-of-fact writing, with a Federalistic prejudice that showed itself as plainly as Bancroft's Jacksonism. For example, as if in rebuttal to Bancroft's eulogy in Volume II, Hildreth refused to become excited over the Quakers. Their divine inner light was to him simply a "whimsical, superstitious, passionate, narrow, ill-regulated reason. . . ." "The immediate actors in these scenes," he said of the Boston patriots of the Revolutionary riots, were "persons of no note, the dregs of the population," whereas to Bancroft they were heroic actors in a classic drama. Bancroft told the American people what they wanted to hear in stirring, dramatic terms; he had fixed ideals of heroic grandeur that dominated his work. Real-

istic and detailed, soundly based on good research, Hildreth's history, unlike Bancroft's, had no grand theme behind it, for history meant to him simply past politics. His legalistic history, expressed in hard, dry prose, failed to strike forth the spark that the elder historian's volumes lighted. There was, however, a half-blind sick man in New England, who, had his genius been applied to the same field as Bancroft's, might have equalled and surpassed him. Francis Parkman, whose popular book of travel and adventure, *The Oregon Trail*, appeared in 1846, was putting the last touches to his first volume of history, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, his hand guided through its six lines a day by a gridiron of wire over the page.

In fact, the decades of the mid-century were alive with good historians. One group of men devoted themselves to themes lying outside the history of the United States — Prescott's histories of Spain in the Old and New World, Parkman's history of French and Indians in the Northwest and Canada, John Lothrop Motley's history of the rise of the Dutch republic Another group interested itself in American affairs, men whose impulses and associations were mostly political and social. Jared Sparks was still active, publishing biographies and editing source materials. George Tucker in the South and Hildreth chose the history of the nation from its beginning Others chose to write narratives of states or treated some particular aspect of political or social history — John Gorham Palfrey chose New England, Charles Gayarré Louisiana, Thomas Hart Benton thirty years of politics from 1820 to 1850, O'Callaghan and Brodhead New York, Samuel Arnold Rhode Island, John Barry Massachusetts, Francis Hawks North Carolina, and Charles Campbell Virginia The dean of the classical period of American historiography, however, was still George Bancroft, whose more than twenty years' domination of the field of American history gave him a place none of the others attained during his time and whose great popularity eclipsed the works of other competent but less prominent historians. Sales records for the early volumes are lacking, but the extent of his popularity may be judged from the fact that forty-one years after the publication of Volume I of the *History* about six hundred copies of it were sold. Bancroft's books filled shelves in thousands of American homes, and most of the younger generation knew American history only as he wrote of it. For more than two decades his name had been very nearly sy

mous with American history, and his position in the field was as unshaken as that of Herodotus among the Greeks.

It took Bancroft two years after his return from England to complete Volumes IV and V of the *History* In 1850 the death of his daughter Louisa caused suspension of his work for a time. Louisa had been her father's companion, a pleasant and charming girl who was always willing to read to him or to accompany him on his walks, and her death left him stricken. "She was a very good daughter," he wrote his sister Eliza, "as well as an intelligent young person; *gentle and amiable, making friends and keeping them.* But I cannot write about it, I bear up under it as well as I can." The loss affected him deeply, and he took seriously for a time the wave of spiritism then sweeping New York City, searching for some message from his daughter. He attended, with Rufus Griswold, N. P. Willis, Bryant, and James Fenimore Cooper, a seance given by the Fox sisters, the current rages, certifying their performance as genuine, and he no doubt attended others as well.

In 1852 Volume IV, introducing the first phases of the Revolution and subtitled "Epoch First, The Overthrow of the European Colonial System, 1748–1763," attested to Bancroft's constant labor. Prescott thought the new volume had ". . . merits and defects, showy, sketchy . . . ," but "brilliant and picturesque, with a good deal of the poetic and much more of philosophy " Irving said each volume seemed to him better than the last, Emerson that it was "noble matter, nobly treated." Lord Mahon wrote from London to express his interest and satisfaction, and Hallam praised the work, warning, however, that "a more moderate tone would carry more weight — an historian has the high office of holding the scales " Francis Bowen, speaking for Boston through the *North American,* found it ". . . animated throughout by a fervid spirit of patriotism; a love of country too exalted to be discriminating. . . . *The historian seems to give way to the eulogist.*" "In this volume," he continued, "as well as in the earlier portion of his work, Mr. Bancroft has devoted much space to an elaborate discussion of topics which have but slender connection with the principal," just criticism in the light of the author's long peroration upon Frederick the Great and German history.

The fourth volume, as its title indicated, dealt with the increasing tension between colonist and parliament and with the first stirrings of revolution. "The hour of revolution was at hand,"

wrote Bancroft, "promising freedom to conscience and dominion to intelligence History . . . enters upon new and unthought of domains of culture and equality, the happier society where power springs from ever-renewed consent." The approaching war was "a civil war . . . , yet for the advancement of the principles of everlasting peace and universal brotherhood." The fifth volume, which appeared within a few months of its predecessor, was captioned "How Great Britain Estranged America, 1763-1766," covering the three stormy years of debate over the taxation questions. An exhaustive and detailed study of a short but important period, the volume took as its theme the impossibility of an understanding between England and the colonies and the inevitability of a future conflict between them

The two volumes, as their simultaneous composition and publication indicated, were of one piece, and perhaps they deserved more properly to be published as one — their unifying theme was the collapse of the old colonial system and the gradual emergence of the spirit of independence Volume IV began with a chapter of introduction concerning the march toward freedom in the middle years of the eighteenth century. The great maritime powers of the mid-eighteenth century desired, he said, peace and repose They had gained control of enough territory and sufficient power over their peoples to wish only time for consolidation of their gains, but in the midst of their power the hour of revolution struck — "Humanity was to make for itself a new existence." The reason? The tendency toward progress inherent in all human affairs All history proved that the tendency of the ages was toward constant advancement "The generations that hand the torch of truth along the lines of time become dust and ashes; but the light still increases its everburning flame, and is fed more plenteously with consecrated oil " The spark glowed in the first epoch of the prelude to war in the years from 1748 to 1763; it burst into flame in the second epoch, in the years from 1763 to 1766. "From the intelligence that had been slowly ripening in the mind of cultural humanity," Bancroft wrote in introduction to Volume V, "sprang the American Revolution, which was designed to organize social union through the establishment of personal freedom, and thus emancipate the nations from all authority not flowing from themselves."

Beginning with the administration of Pelham, in Volume IV Bancroft set the stage with the villains and the heroes of the piece

—the "imbecilic" Newcastle ("After long research I cannot find that he ever once attended seriously to an American question"); Pitt, "the great commoner"; George the Third ("an innate love of authority . . . , self-willed"), the great anonymous mass of liberty-loving colonial Englishmen who could not brook repression. The story he told was one of bitterness and misunderstanding, of vaguely ascertained and more vaguely denied rights, of confused relations between colony and mother country, of weak statesmanship and rapacious governors, with the omen of revolution, a deep desire for independence and liberty, behind all The taxation troubles of 1763–65 he treated in great detail, until in the Stamp Act, "the harbinger of American Independence," Bancroft bared the central point of conflict, taxation without representation and its implications of complete internal colonial control by parliament and crown. Here, said the historian, dawned "the day-star of the American Union," and the book closed with the stalemate between parliament and colonies, with a promise of the decay and collapse of the old colonial system, which, "founded upon injustice, was at war with itself."

The success of these volumes spurred the appearance of the sixth, which emerged from the presses in 1854. With his work progressing rapidly and successfully, Bancroft thought of little else than the continuance and completion of his history The Democratic victories of 1852 led Prescott to inquire, "Now that your side has won the game, I wonder if you will be tempted away from the historic chair to make another diplomatic episode?" The answer was an emphatic negative. When Charles Sumner asked him pointblank if he had any desire to enter politics once more, Bancroft assured him "most unequivocally that his first desire was to finish his history, and that he would not touch politics till that was finished, say six years from now " The composition of two volumes in three years, and a subsequent volume in two, left little time for any other activity, since Bancroft usually had the material gathered and the plan sketched for the next volume as the last came from the press. Letters went to London, asking for the Greville papers,

the exact site of an old fort and a forgotten shipyard; a friend in Virginia copied regimental militia rolls, and so on. In London, in

the State Paper Office, two copyists were constantly at work; one of them, Robert Lemon, was in Bancroft's employ for nine years, and the other, W. N. Sainsbury, for four. The historian's accounts showed frequent drafts for amounts varying between eighty and one hundred and seventy pounds paid every three months to these men for documents.

Volume VI carried Bancroft's narrative to May of 1774 and completed his analysis of the causes of the Revolution He began with a chapter-long survey of the state of Europe, passing over each major power in turn and evaluating its stage of progress toward free and popular government, while on England he spent two chapters, analyzing its dependencies, the state of its religion, its people, its colonial policies, its social and economic structure He introduced firebrand Sam Adams, weak and vacillating Governor Hutchinson, James Otis, "the chief incendiary," Lord Bute, "ignorant of men and business, without sagacity or courage," and Patrick Henry, "the child of the forest, his serene mind ripening for duty." He showed arguments waxing hotter, and tempers growing shorter, until the penal acts in 1774 "dissolved the moral connections between the two countries." With his keen sense of the dramatic value of his material Bancroft closed the book with the prophetic words, "*The knell of the ages of servitude and inequality was rung;* those of equality and brotherhood were come into life. As the fleets and armies of England went forth to consolidate arbitrary power, the sound of war everywhere else on earth died away. Kings sat still in awe, and nations turned to watch the issue"

Prefacing Volume VI Bancroft printed a list of materials owned by or made accessible to him in the preparation of his work on the pre-Revolutionary period thus far, a list that showed that his evidence had been drawn from such diverse sources as the papers of Samuel Adams, of Governor Hutchinson, of American colonial agents in London, from the Public Records Office and State Paper Office of Great Britain, Treasury records, Board of Trade reports, proceedings in Parliament, the French Archives, the French Ministry of Marine and War, from collections in Holland, Spanish correspondence, newspaper files, the Clinton manuscripts, various biographies, and scores of other sources Although Prescott had complained eleven years previously to Sparks that "Bancroft does not place the same stress on original documents that you and I do," Bancroft's list was ample proof that he conscientiously endeavored

to make no important statement without reference to an original document. Another criticism of Prescott's, however, that the author should provide more complete documentation so that the full extent of his sources and his use of them might be realized, had more foundation. References in the early volumes were often vague and indefinite, and after Volume VI he gave up their use entirely, finally restoring the practice half-heartedly in Volume IX. But this lack of scholarly apparatus did not mean that his evidence was either faulty or lacking. It merely meant that, writing swiftly (five volumes in ten years) he found it convenient to depend upon the reader's trust for acceptance of his statements. A random check of the sixth volume discloses that in one chapter the author used nineteen primary and six secondary sources, in another, seventeen primary and eight secondary; and in a third, eleven primary and nine secondary. It is clear that Bancroft did, to a large extent, base his chronicle upon original source material, using primary manuscripts whenever possible and buttressing them by the use of judiciously chosen secondary printed matter, and later historians find that only in his failure to make full use of newspapers and periodical files did he fail to approximate modern research methods

On another score the volumes covering the period immediately before the Revolution are open to modern criticism, however. Bancroft wrote history at a time when it meant something more than an objective re-creation of the past. The tradition of historical writing in which he was reared asked that the past be made significant, that history give instruction, that a philosophic theme underlie the interpretation of events. It was not the day of specialization nor of universal public school education; thus accuracy might be sacrificed to readability, objectivity to a controlling thesis, absolute unity to diversity of information. As a result Bancroft indulged himself for the edification of his readers in digressions calculated to do little more than to provide knowledge upon unfamiliar subjects; a complete short history of Germany, a history of slavery traced to classic antiquity, a survey of European politics from the Renaissance, a disquisition upon Indian lore and customs, the last by courtesy of the authority Henry Schoolcraft. A penchant for the striking phrase rather than a respect for completely objective accuracy led him now and then into a broad and unsupported generality, such as that of Volume VI which declared without the slightest proof that "the people of Massachusetts, beyond any other

colony . . . , loved the land of their ancestors" Neither were quotations in his time as sacrosanct as later historians made them. He felt free to change tenses or moods, to transpose parts of quotations, to simplify language, and to give free renditions. He had no compunction at blending material from several quotations to form a single uninterrupted speech, as he did in the cases of the 1776 speeches of Pitt, Conway, Grenville, and Mansfield. A check of all the references to quotations given in forty pages of the sixth volume against the originals in Elliot's *Debates* shows that not one was transcribed with absolute accuracy.

Yet in the 1850's no one minded a great deal. The public knew that Bancroft could be trusted to use all ethical means at his disposal to insure the foundation of his narrative on the complete facts, and if he occasionally sacrificed accuracy to readability, or displayed his learning by a digression on slavery, or underlined the significance of an event with a philosophic paragraph of purple prose, there was no harm done. It was "noble matter, nobly treated," in Emerson's phrase, and minor weaknesses could be forgiven for the sweep of events that his pages chronicled.

The decade of the 1850's was perhaps the quietest of Bancroft's middle years, since his time was occupied almost exclusively with the composition and publication of his histories, a few speaking engagements, and an occasional trip In 1854 he traveled west, in the late summer, as far as St Louis, the most westerly point he reached during his lifetime He had but little acquaintance with the West, and the towns in Illinois, their public squares ringed with the wagons of "movers," surprised him with their bustle and activity. The great westward movement was at its height, and the stream of emigrants Bancroft saw was the advance guard of the fifteen million who were to follow in the next forty years Nearly fifteen hundred wagons a month passed through Peoria, Illinois, in one month of 1854, Davenport, Iowa, built three hundred new houses that year, twelve thousand emigrants arrived by train in Chicago during one week

Bancroft stopped first in Chicago. It was "a wonderful prairie city, which has a population of twenty thousand, and its oldest native inhabitant is but twenty-two years old . . , new, dusty in dry weather, muddy when wet, busy and active . . . , full of the hope of boundless prosperity and increase." From Chicago he proceeded to Springfield, the capital, where he found the politics

highly interesting; the Kansas-Nebraska bill of 1854, which repealed the Missouri Compromise and opened the Northwest to slavery, had stirred up a hornet's nest of resentment in the West. In Wisconsin, six months before Bancroft's trip, a convention of dissatisfied Whigs and some Democrats had launched a new party, called Republican, and while Bancroft was in Illinois the party had met in State Convention in Michigan. The new group was organizing in the midwestern states in some strength, and in Illinois a middle-aged lawyer, Abraham Lincoln, seemed to be a coming power in it. Lincoln, who had served a term in Congress as a Whig, was just beginning to re-enter politics after five years of virtual retirement, and after October, when his debates with Douglas began, he drew more and more attention as a Republican politician. Bancroft met him in Springfield, at some time in July or August, and was sufficiently unimpressed to record nothing in his journal or his letters of the meeting, although later, when the prairie lawyer's name was spread over the nation as a presidential nominee, he recalled that Lincoln had seemed to him then not at all the type for a public office. Bancroft next proceeded to St. Louis, stayed a short time, and returned to New York in late August to take up the labor of history once more

Despite the fact that the forthcoming Volume VII occupied much of his available time, Bancroft during 1855 prepared and published a collection of his fugitive essays and orations, both published and unpublished, which he titled *Literary and Historical Miscellanies.* The book had little to commend it other than the fact that it gathered together some of his best, as well as his weakest, non-historical writing, charting for the reader the shifting influences on his mind and the development of his interests throughout the years. The opening essay, *The Doctrine of Temperaments,* written in 1824, was a rather shallow treatment of the classic and medieval theory of the "humours" as an index to personality, with examples of character types illustrating each — Paris, Endymion, Alcibiades, Nero, Hotspur, Henry V, Murat, and others were "sanguine"; the Western pioneers, Themistocles, Hannibal, and Caesar were "bilious"; Vergil, Gray, Demosthenes, Burke, and Pitt were "melancholic"; Hume and various Dutch statesmen were "phlegmatic." Bancroft added two extra types, the "nervous" — Voltaire, Socrates, Hadrian, and the Russian Suvorov — and "athletic," Hercules, Potemkin, Ajax, Chaucer's Miller. The most

significant aspect of the essay was its reflection of the author's youthful interest in history, ten years before the publication of his first volume. *Ennui*, written in 1830, and *The Ruling Passion in Death*, written in 1833, were both heavily tinged with a Byronic melancholy and inflated nearly to the bursting point by rhetoric. The former, as its name implied, was an analysis of boredom, which, he concluded, could be avoided only "by conforming the passions of the human breast to the conditions of human existence"; the latter was a study of famous deathscenes, pervaded by a melancholy sentimentalism. *Studies of German Literature* was a reprinting of the articles published in *The American Quarterly Review* in 1827 and 1828, still after thirty years one of the best surveys of the field to be published. *The Economy of Athens* and *The Decline of the Roman People*, adapted from reviews written in 1831 and 1834, were historical studies of the deteriorating effects of slavery upon ancient civilizations, studies made timely by the trend of current events Two reviews, previously published in 1829, entitled *Russia* and *The Wars of Russia and Turkey* testified to Bancroft's apprenticeship to historical writing in the later twenties. An unpublished essay called *Calvin the Reformer*, dating from 1834, treated the relation between Calvinism and liberty, a relationship treated in greater detail in the early historical vol-
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[illegible] *The Office of the People* (1835) and his speech before the New York Historical Society, *The Necessity, The Reality, and The Promise of the Progress of the Human Race* (1854), alone justified the publication of the volume. Spaced almost twenty years apart, the first written at the threshold of his political and literary career, these two essays represented the best of his thinking and writing, stating fully and clearly the central thesis which underlay his philosophy of history. In the earlier essay Bancroft had affirmed the existence in mankind of the divinely inspired faculty of reason, and man's power to guide himself in matters pertaining to art, government, and religion. The belief in progress, founded upon man's possession of that intuitive "reason" by which truth might be steadily perceived by all humanity, which was implied in the oration of 1835, Bancroft now corroborated and confirmed.

Building upon the foundations laid down in *The Office of the*

People, he summarized his arguments for *The Necessity, the Reality, and the Promise of the Progress of the Human Race* in the oration of that name. He saw the *necessity* of human progress inherent in mankind, since man had within him this divinely inspired reason with which to perceive truth. The *reality* of progress he confirmed by a lengthy contrast between past and present conditions in art, government, science, and related fields. Behind the soul of man lay the *promise* of progress, in the fact that God dwelt in man: "That God has dwelt and dwells with humanity is not only the noblest illustration of its nature, but the perfect guarantee of its progress" And progress, in Bancroft's terms, meant "the degrees in which the intelligence of the common mind has prevailed over wealth and brute force; in other words, the measure of the progress of civilization is the progress of the people." What is history, then, but the record of man's progress, documentary proof of man's right to freedom, of his ability to rule himself? History to Bancroft was thus something more than the chronicle of past events; it was God's plan for the advancement of mankind translated into action. The democracy of his volumes lay in something much deeper than political opportunism. From the evidence of these essays, it was clear that Bancroft could not have failed to write history in any other fashion had he never entered politics, nor could he have repudiated democracy had he never written a line of history.

Bancroft proceeded, in the essay on progress, to explain more fully from the transcendental viewpoint what he judged to be the function of the historian The "reason," as he had defined it in *The Office of the People*, was the perceptive faculty necessary to both the poet and the historian. Applied to the study of the present and of the future, it produced the poet, who was merely a mouthpiece for the messages of the Infinite he received through his delicately attuned intuitive power. The historian similarly made use of the "reason," but with the significant difference that he applied it to the study of *past* action, perceiving in the past the workings of the Infinite Mind. "God," he said, "is visible in history." The office of the historian, to Bancroft's way of thinking, was therefore twofold. He examined the past to find proof of the correctness of mankind's perception of divine moral law. History, then, was on the one hand the record of man's attempts to receive from God certain ideas of truth, morality, beauty, and justice, and the histo-

rian presented the evidence relating to his success. But the historian, he proceeded to explain, must examine the past to find these indications of man's progress as planned by God, history is but the record of the divine plan for the human race, and the aim of the historian is to perceive and explain its significance. "Universal history," he said, "does but seek to relate the sum of all God's works of providence." The historian must read the past in terms of the progress of the mass of humanity, since all men are endowed equally with the intuitive Reason and the ability to progress. The historian must, in analyzing the past, ask himself constantly, did this event mark a step forward for the common man? The historian's function, like that of the churchman, was fundamentally a religious one. Each event of the past was but a part of the entire divinely ordained plan, and the writer of history intuitively perceived and explained the unity and continuity of the whole

In effect, Bancroft simply explained to the public what he had been doing for thirty years, that is, he had been studying and writing history from a transcendentalist point of view, and his 1854 oration may be regarded as one of the last utterances of the great New England intellectual tradition that was slowly dying as he spoke Five years later the English scientist Charles Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species,* making it no longer possible to believe these things with the same certainty as before, but the atmosphere of Bancroft's early years had been charged with transcendental philosophy It had all been clear when Coleridge and the German thinkers pointed it out to Emerson and his disciples, the Deity gave man the intuitive power of "reason," and if he but followed the faint but unmistakable whisperings of that inner power all things might be his — liberty, justice, truth, even divine perfection itself Bancroft had grown up in and with the movement, adjusting it to history, and not, as Emerson and the others had done, *to theology and ethics The distinguishing characteristics* of his historical writing — his nationalism, his democracy, his belief in progress — had been the result of his essentially trancendental beliefs. His view of the historian as the man who found God

l its inevitable
optimism and
essay form in

Literary and Historical Miscellanies, rounded out his philosophy

and completed the theory of history partially expounded twenty years previously

Volume VII proceeded slowly, and it was not until 1858 that the book appeared, followed in 1860 by Volume VIII. There was much to be done, the loot of the British and French archives to examine, the large collections of private papers to read and sift, authority to balance against authority, military operations to plot, a mass of detail to search out and verify. As usual, Bancroft kept the mails full of queries and requests for information. His acquaintance with the Carrolls stood him in good stead when he needed copies of the letters of the Maryland Calverts Dr. Richard Frothingham of Boston, an authority on local history and himself the author of a study of the siege of Boston, furnished information about the Bunker Hill engagement. Prescott, whose grandfather figured importantly in the battle, looked over proof sheets, complimenting the author upon his impartial and candid account. Still somewhat suspicious of his friend's political ambitions, Prescott appended a note of warning.

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crowns her votaries that deserve it with her amarinthine wreath.

However, Bancroft was too immersed in history to think of active participation in politics. John Lothrop Motley came to visit his old schoolmaster at Newport; Irving sent him a copy of the second volume of his *Washington*, just off the press; Edward Everett Hale visited him in New York to read proof; the Danish translator of his first three volumes sent him specimen copies for perusal; Prescott's *History of Philip the Second* had to be read for criticism at the author's request Bancroft lived and thought history, begrudging the time spent in seemingly unnecessary social activity. His wife preferred to stay at the Newport home when the creative fire was in him, "playing cards," said her husband, "a shameful waste of time" Both of his sons were abroad, John studying art in Dusseldorf and George in school in Paris. Thus the historian spent many days alone in New York, where his work might go on in fairly uninterrupted quiet. John Bigelow recalled in later years that Bancroft, when forced by etiquette to attend a

dinner or a reception, displayed a tendency to stop at the nearest table or bookcase on the way to greet his hostess, quickly glancing at all the books in view and occasionally needing a reminder to proceed. Forgetting that he was nearly sixty, and that the tremendous mental elasticity of his youth could no longer be expected, he often became discouraged at his apparent lack of energy. He still rose at dawn to begin his work, but, as he wrote his wife, "Time was when seventeen hours' work a day had nothing to me appalling; now it is an utter impossibility." Eight or ten hours' labor tired him out.

Volumes VII and VIII, titled "Epoch Third — America Declares Itself Independent," together made a unit, since they covered the record of events from May, 1774, to July 4, 1776 They were the best of his volumes to date. Based primarily upon his huge collection of colonial letters and of the records of the committees of correspondence, it was the most complete and authoritative account of the crucial months of the Revolution that had yet appeared. Much of the material used in the composition of the volumes had never before been available to historical research, and Bancroft approached the task of relating the definitive story of the War in a scientific spirit He intended to be scrupulously fair, to both England and to the colonies, in his analysis of men and motives, and he paused in Volume VIII to explain his viewpoint to the reader, who, having been accustomed perhaps to less objective and more flattering accounts of the Revolution, might be shocked at the plain facts·

> Indiscriminate praise neither paints to the life, nor teaches by example, nor advances social science; history is no mosaic of funeral eulogies and family epitaphs, nor can the hand of truth sketch character without shadows as well as light. . . . The historian, even more than philosophers and naturalists, must bring to his pursuit the freedom of an unbiassed mind, in his case, the submission of reason to prejudice would have a deeper criminality, for he cannot neglect to be impartial without at once falsifying nature and denying providence. . . .

Following the usual pattern, the seventh volume opened with a chapter sketching the significance of the events to follow. "The hour of the American Revolution had come," he wrote. "
people of the continent obeyed one general impulse, as the e
in spring listens to the command of nature, and without the

pearance of effort bursts forth into life. . . . The indestructible elements of freedom in the colonies asked room for expansion and growth. A revolution, unexpected in the moment of its coming, but prepared by glorious forerunners, grew naturally and necessarily out of the series of past events by the formative principle of a living belief. . . ." The seeds of liberty, planted by the first English settlers, had flowered; humanity was ready to take another forward step toward universal freedom, "the change which Divine Wisdom ordained, and which no human policy or force could hold back" The reader saw the gathering of the forces — New York's proposal of a congress, the meetings in the Carolinas and Virginia, the Massachusetts convention, the first uncertain Continental Congress, the stubborn inertia of Great Britain, the shots at Lexington and Concord that echoed round the world. Swiftly the narrative moved through 1774 as the Second Continental Congress met, as Washington took command of the motley army of farmers and militia, and finally the flaming words of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence closed the volumes.

The story of the Revolution was to Bancroft a Greek epic, with heroes of classic mould moving in stately dignity on the stage of history. The reader saw Franklin, a shrewd Yankee Machiavelli, matching wits with the Britishers and the clever French statesmen. He saw Sam Adams, a revolutionist with a genius for organizing and plotting, and Jefferson, a man without envy, without enemies, the philosopher of the Revolution, the great democrat who believed implicitly in the worth and dignity of the common man. "No man of his century," said Bancroft, "had more trust in the collective reason and conscience of his fellow man, or better knew how to take his counsel." Others, great and small, moved through Bancroft's pages, but above them all towered the Jove-like figure of Washington, silent, lonely, brooding, courageous, a man deeply conscious of God and of his mission in the war to come, "a man who established a new criterion of greatness."

The reception of the two new volumes reflected the success of the earlier ones. Irving found them "spicy and animating," with "great spirit and a dramatic effect." Prescott complimented the author highly, though he believed Bancroft laid himself open to attack by his failure to include footnotes, a practice which Bancroft explained arose ". . . from the variety and multitude of the papers which have been used, and which could not be intelligibly

cited, without burdening the pages with a disproportionate commentary." Prescott himself could no longer work. Struck down by the illness that was to kill him in a few months, he wrote Bancroft sadly, "Since my apoplectic thump I have done nothing in a literary way, giving my wits a good chance to settle and come into their natural state again."

CHAPTER SEVEN

The War for the Union 1860–1867

THE EIGHTH volume of the History, with the narrative poised on the brink of the Revolutionary War, was the last for nearly a decade, for when it appeared Bancroft felt no inclination to write of the past when the nation of which he wrote was locked in internecine war. Since his return from London in 1849 the breach between the North and the South had been widening, and the question of slavery that had so perplexed Massachusetts politics twenty years earlier became in 1860 the only question before the nation.

Though slavery was to many, as early as 1850, a moral issue, it was not viewed as such by the majority of the people of the United States, who saw it as a matter of extending an undesirable institution into the newly opened Western territories. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had been intended to settle the problem forever, but that agreement had applied only to the Louisiana territory. The acquisition of Texas and California brought the problem of extending slavery up again, and in 1850 another compromise was reached — California would be free, the question would be settled individually by each other territory as it became a state, and a more effective fugitive slave law would be passed. Trouble was avoided only temporarily; Nebraska and Kansas, lying partly within the old Louisiana territory covered by the compromise of 1820 and partly within that affected by the compromise of 1850, aroused the sleeping dog once more, and the execution of the harsh and retroactive provisions of the Fugitive Slave Law stirred up bitter feelings. The Fugitive Slave Law made slavery a moral issue, an issue that involved not simply the extension of an eco-

nomic system, but one that touched upon free speech, the freedom of the press, trial by jury, personal liberty, natural rights, and the Constitution and the Declaration, and by 1860 it was an issue on which every man had to take a stand. The law said runaway slaves must be returned to their owners, but the marines had to be called out to restore order in Philadelphia after an apprehended slave had been rescued by a mob and freed. Boston drove out Southern sheriffs who came with search warrants, and Theodore Parker said that the rescue of a frightened Negro named Shadrach was "the most noble deed in Boston since the destruction of the tea in 1773" Tempers grew short. Parker called the typical Southerner "thriftless, idle, drunken, lewd, shrill-voiced, feeble-bodied, and ugly to look upon" Brooks, the Representative from South Carolina, stepped to Charles Sumner's desk in the Senate Chamber and caned the New Englander into insensibility. In the West the fanatic John Brown killed five slavery sympathizers in cold blood. Garrison shouted for secession — of the North from the South — and Wendell Phillips called the union of free men and slave states "accursed of God" Even Emerson, secure in his Concord study, was moved to mild profanity by the fugitive slave law, and William Cullen Bryant thought it "odious" Pens were busy in North and South, spilling inflammable ink on the blaze Richard Hildreth *suspended his historical work to write a highly colored account* of the slave market, called *The White Slave* George Fitzhugh of [illegible]

tearing out those portions of the Bible that seemed to countenance human bondage. Slave songs became popular in the North, with thousands lamenting the fate of darling Nelly Gray, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became the mistaken symbol of all that slavery encompassed; a million readers hated Simon Legree, forgetting that he was a New Englander When John Brown went to the scaffold, more than a few Northern church bells tolled in requiem, and Emerson called him a saint. The nation lost its sanity and its perspective in one short decade.

Although personally unconcerned with active politics during the fifties, Bancroft kept close watch of the fortunes of his party. The Democratic organization was badly split, torn along sectional lines by the familiar slavery question that had wrecked its oppor-

tunities in Massachusetts many years before, as the historian well remembered. Bancroft was puzzled. He could not recognize his party in the confusion over slavery and states' rights. His own sentiments he had made clear thirty years before. He was an anti-slavery man and a Unionist, and what were slavery and secession men doing under the Democratic banner of Jackson? Franklin Pierce, a Democratic President, he told Marcy in 1856, "has been so busy in reading people out of the Democratic party, that he at last has wandered himself so far astray as to be entirely beyond hailing distance. . . . To crown the whole, men whose services are accepted, declare the Union is not to be maintained if a candidate they do not like should chance to be elected." What sort of talk was that? "It is a cardinal principle of democracy to submit to the will of the majority; old Hickory said the Union must be preserved." And the Southerners who called themselves Democrats! "How my oration of 1836," Bancroft wrote angrily, "would be repudiated by what calls itself democracy now!" His party was, in his opinion, an "unproductive hybrid begot by southern arrogance upon Northern subserviency." The course of the Democrats was clear, he told Marcy — get rid of "this bastard race that controls the organization"; jettison Pierce, the tool of the slaveholding aristocrats, a man for whom "posterity will find no apology but in the feebleness of his intellect", bring Kansas into the Union as a free state "in the manner that will least disturb tranquillity"; and return to the principles of Jackson and Jefferson. Had he been in closer touch with politics, Bancroft would have seen that he was asking the impossible. He was, in effect, a man without a party, for his party was dead along with Jefferson and Jackson, never to be reborn. It was no longer 1840, and the lines of cleavage were different and deeper now. The farmer and the mechanic and the banker in the North stood together against the slaveholder, the farmer, and the cotton-grower of the South. Elections did not turn on tariffs, hard money, labor legislation, and log-cabins, but on slavery and free-soil. The old issues and the old leaders were gone, and there was only a single issue left for Democrat or Whig, Know-nothing or Republican.

The election of James Buchanan to the Presidency on the Democratic ticket in 1856 was hardly the answer to his party's troubles. A Pennsylvanian, his majority came from the South, and every slave state except Maryland had voted for him. The Southern wing

of the party thus placed a Northern Democrat in power, and Buchanan, in attempting to satisfy both sections, pleased neither. That Buchanan was faced with the difficult problem of closing the breach within the party ranks Bancroft was aware, and on the eve of his inauguration, the historian wrote a long letter of advice to his old friend and former diplomatic superior. Although the South had given Buchanan votes, Bancroft bade him remember that his nomination over Pierce had been due to the North, and that his duty to the party and the nation was clear to purge "the rabid pro-slavery nullifiers," "to disregard them and all other selfish factions," and to "bring Kansas into the Union as a free state and with the general acquiescence of the South . . . , a great healing measure which can restore the country permanently to tranquillity." But most of all, Bancroft believed, the nation and the party needed strong leadership, and he hoped that Buchanan's election had passed the administration "from feeble and incompetent hands to able and safe ones." The historian's advice was excellent, but to put it into practice was nearly impossible.

Buchanan's administration, a few days after its beginning, was immediately embarrassed by the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Dred Scott and his wife. Scott, a Missouri Negro whose master had at one time taken him to the free state of Illinois, claimed freedom, and while his case did not involve any important point of law, it was evident that a Court ruling upon it might settle the whole question of slavery in Kansas and the territories, for his wife claimed residence in Minnesota Territory, free under the Missouri Compromise. It was Buchanan's hope that the prestige of the Court might lead the nation to accept its settlement of the issue and thus remove it from the national scene once and for all Chief Justice Taney's decision against Scott, however, not only weakened the prestige of the Court but brought wholehearted protest from a majority of the Northern states, projecting the issue into the limelight more powerfully than before Scott, argued Taney, was a Negro, and therefore could not become a citizen The Declaration of Independence could not be held to declare a Negro and a white man equal, for it must be interpreted in the light of conditions at the time, and in 1776 Negro slavery existed in every colony. Furthermore, Taney continued, the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional, for Congress could not take away property, slave or otherwise, from an owner in any territory of the United

States — a ruling that threw open all the new territories of the West to slavery.

Taney's decision met with Bancroft's disapproval both on historical and political grounds, and in a letter to Senator James Mason of Virginia he struck at the root of Taney's arguments. Examination of historical records proved that in New York State, at least, during the Revolutionary period, free Negroes had been treated as citizens. Furthermore, Taney was wrong in saying that white men then or ever regarded Negroes as without rights — "I can quote against him one by one any number of opinions, expressed by statesmen, north and south of the Potomac, from the first agitation of strife with England to the formation of the Federal Constitution, i.e., from 1764 to 1789." Taney's interpretation of the Constitution was "*most* latitudinarian," the historian wrote. "I remain of the old States-Rights School, and believe that the framers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution meant to leave the subject exclusively, unreservedly, with the laws of the States." The decision, in Bancroft's opinion, might prove politically disastrous to the Democrats, for it gave the new Republican party an issue, "making it the champion of the slave and placing the Democrats in the position of supporting the institution, a position bound to alienate many Northern votes." The result of the Dred Scott case, to him, was "that we of the Northern democracy have been dreadfully routed . . . , and we are handed over to the most corrupt set of political opponents, that I have ever encountered." "To bring things right," he concluded, "our next President should be of the South; a man of vigour and firmness, of firmness and truly national views, comprehensive and impartial."

Buchanan's handling of the Kansas troubles further convinced Bancroft of the President's inability to cope with the slavery problem. Kansas, split by the undeclared and bloody war between free-soilers and slavery men, was ready for admission to the Union, and the delicate problem of whether or not it would be a free state was placed directly before the unhappy President. Bancroft's cabinet-partner, Robert J. Walker, an able and honest man, had been appointed governor of Kansas, and under him an election for the territorial legislature resulted in a free-soil majority. Before the new legislature could convene, however, the old proslavery legislature, meeting in Lecompton, proceeded to frame a

constitution under which Kansas should apply for admission as a state, a document that the legislature knew would be rejected by popular vote. To insure a favorable vote, it was decided to allow the people to vote only as to whether or not they would accept the constitution with or without slavery, an offer less just than it appeared, for the only point upon which the carefully worded document allowed expression of opinion was whether or not importation of slaves was to be sanctioned. The free-soilers promptly refused to vote, the constitution was adopted in 1857, and the admission of Kansas as a slave state was reported to Buchanan.

In the acrimonious debate that followed Bancroft played a prominent part. The Kansas question was important to him, not only because of its bearing upon slavery, but because it dealt with the primary liberties of the people in government. In 1826 Bancroft had proclaimed the voice of the people to be the voice of God. Thirty years had not changed his mind, and the evident threat to the political beliefs to which he had clung since the beginning of his career brought him out of the study to fight When the Democrats of New York called a meeting at the Academy of Music to protest against the Lecompton document and its acceptance, Bancroft presided He wrote to Buchanan, warning him against the admission of Kansas under the disputed constitution, but he placed the most confidence in Stephen A. Douglas, senator from Illinois, and a figure of increasing importance in the Democratic party. To Douglas Bancroft wrote in December of 1857

> The people here rule and should rule, and have a right to decide on their constitution They do not permit their power to be sequestered; [illegible] agents, [illegible]. The [illegible] like.

The solution to the Kansas problem was as simple to him as the solution of the Dred Scott case was clear — let the people of the states decide "The tribunal to consult," he wrote Douglas, "is not the North or the South, but Kansas. They have a perfect right to reject a constitution or accept it, be it good or bad. . . ."

The position of the Democrats in regard to the Scott decision and the Kansas constitution illustrated the dilemma into which Bancroft's party and its leader Buchanan had been forc[illegible]

ery in 1858 and 1859 When Kansas presented its credentials for admission, Buchanan had two choices: he might refuse to accept them, and thus alienate the Southern wing of his party, or he might recommend admission, thus not only drawing down Northern censure but negating the entire principle of states'-rights upon which the Democratic party had rested for years. Choosing what appeared to be the lesser evil, he accepted the Lecompton constitution and passed the responsibility to Congress. Again the Democratic majority faced a dilemma — to vote against the administration meant an internal party division and the resultant weakening of the party for the elections of 1858, whereas to support Buchanan meant a national party split along sectional lines and the almost certain defeat of Northern Democratic candidates for re-election. The Northern and states'-rights wing of the party, under the leadership of Douglas, who had for four years been advocating the settlement of the slavery question by the people of the territories, opposed the administration and forced a compromise. The debates in the Senate broke the Democratic party in half and made Douglas the center of national attention. He had been considered as a probable presidential candidate in 1860, but his opposition to the Lecompton constitution earned him Buchanan's hostility and cost him prestige in the South; however, it gained him both the backing of Northern Democrats such as Bancroft and the admiration of the Republicans, who even considered making him their own candidate for the presidency.

In the political struggles of the late fifties Bancroft found himself more and more a supporter of Stephen A. Douglas, for his beliefs corresponded more closely to those of the Illinois senator than to those of any other figure on the national scene. Like him, Bancroft was a believer in the older Democratic tradition of states'-rights (which Douglas renamed "squatter sovereignty"), saw eye to eye with the Senator on the Kansas question, like Douglas distrusted the Southern wing of the party, and like him threw in his lot with the Northerners against the temporizing and compromising Buchanan. It was possible, thought both men, to shift the settlement of the slavery question from Congress to the states, where, had it not been for Taney, the Democrats might have allowed it to rest. Bancroft's prophetic words to Mason in 1857, that the Scott decision was a hollow and pyrrhic victory for the Southern Democrats, rang true.

The fundamental disagreement between Southern and Northern Democrats cost them the election of 1860. Douglas, the candidate of the Northern branch, obtained little Southern support, receiving less than ten per cent of the votes cast. Breckenridge, the candidate of the pro-slavery extremists among the Democrats, swept the Cotton South but lost the upper border states to Bell of the Constitutional Union party. Lincoln, the Republican candidate, took the North and the election. There was no place in any party for the conservative, antislavery, states'-rights Democrat and Unionist of Bancroft's stamp.

Bancroft voted for Douglas in 1860 and was not ashamed to admit it. The "Little Giant" of Illinois most nearly represented what he regarded as the combination of qualities and policies necessary to the preservation of both the peace of the nation and the existence of the Democratic party. Douglas' election, he told his friend Reverdy Johnson, might have postponed the settlement of the slavery question by compromise until the heat of the argument had died down and a peaceful solution found possible. Like many Northern Democrats he believed the Republicans too radical and precipitous, and Lincoln an untried statesman probably both unable to control the abolitionists within his party or to mediate successfully with the Southerners He had met Lincoln in Springfield on his trip west in 1854, and he had not been impressed. The nation needed a strong man at its head, and after the failure of Buchanan to act decisively, Lincoln's election filled the historian with gloom. "We suffer from the want of an organizing mind at the head of our government," he wrote. "We have a president without brains and a cabinet whose personal views outweigh patriotism. . . . The only trouble of mind I have springs from my want of confidence in our present administration."

Lincoln's election hurried events toward their inevitable climax. Finding in the Republican victory a threat to their chief economic institution and to their political power, the states of the deep South one by one broke their bonds with the Union: South Carolina in December of 1860; Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas a month later. Buchanan, searching waveringly for a means of escape, suggested a compromise, proposing various amendments to the Constitution that neither North nor South would feel inclined to accept. While Andrew Johnson of Tennessee and J[illegible] Crittenden of Kentucky proposed compromises [illegible] failed

pass, the seceded states proceeded to call a convention to frame a new Constitution. Lincoln, on the slow tour of the North to his inauguration, kept his silence, declaring only that the Union should be preserved, that he could make no compromise with secession or slavery, and that the laws of the United States would be enforced, although "the government will not use force unless force is used against it" His inaugural address, analyzed carefully in the South, denied the right of any state to secede, repeated his oft-avowed statement that he had no intention of tampering with slavery in the territories where it existed, and affirmed his intention to "preserve, protect, and defend" the Constitution. To those, including Bancroft, who hoped for the presentation of a program by means of which the seceded states might be persuaded to return, the inaugural came as a distinct disappointment. A month later aged Edmund Ruffin touched a match to a cannon pointed at Fort Sumter in South Carolina and the Civil War began.

To Bancroft, as to Lincoln, the Civil War was first of all a war for the preservation of the Union and next a war for the abolition of slavery. A British correspondent, Dr. Russell, writing in his *Diary North and South,* claimed in 1863 that in March, 1861, he had heard Bancroft and others in New York express the idea that "the Federal government was a mere machine put forward by the sovereign states . . . , that according to the Constitution the government could not employ force to prevent secession, or to compel states which had seceded by the will of the people, to acknowledge the Federal power." While others may have made the statement, Bancroft in all probability did no such thing, for the ideas were a complete reversal of everything he believed. He had been a Jacksonian Democrat for thirty years, and justification of secession on constitutional grounds to him would have been unthinkable, whatever his respect for the doctrine of states' rights. The theme of his historical work had been the confederation of the weak, disunited colonies into a unified republic, and his post-war volumes were to continue to present the belief that in federation lay the strength of the nation. In 1856, in his letter to William Marcy, his chief complaint against the Southern Democrats had been their willingness to shatter the nation's unity, and his distrust of the Southern nullifiers had been clearly expressed a number of times. Old Hickory's toast, "The Union must be preserved," was always his watchword, and while presiding at a meeting in New York in

November of 1861 to collect money for the relief of the North Carolina Unionists, he repeated them once more: "If slavery and the Union are incompatible, listen to the words that come to you from the tomb of Andrew Jackson: 'The Union must be preserved at all hazards . . .' If anyone claims the compromises of the Constitution, let him begin by placing the Constitution in power by respecting it and upholding it!"

Abraham Lincoln too believed that the war was primarily a war to preserve the Union and to uphold the Constitution, and his reluctance to emancipate the slave at once drew down upon him the wrath of the abolitionists, to whom the war was a war to stamp out slavery and nothing else Although the preservation of the Union was to Bancroft the most important objective of the struggle, he, unlike the chief executive, believed that the abolition of slavery was, in the long view, the quickest way to end it. Slavery had taken the states out of the Union, and its abolition would bring them back in by removing the reason for their secession The historian joined his voice, therefore, but for a different reason, to those of the abolitionists, suggesting that Lincoln free the slaves without delay "Your administration has fallen upon times which will be remembered as long as human events find a record," he concluded a letter to Lincoln, describing the November meeting called to aid the Carolina Unionists. "I sincerely wish you the glory of perfect success Civil war is the instrument of Divine Providence to root out social slavery, posterity will not be satisfied with the result, unless the consequences of the war shall cause an increase of free states This is the universal expectation and hope of men of all parties." The President's courteous reply made no commitment, Lincoln refused to be hurried:

The main thought in the closing paragraph of your letter is one which does not escape my attention, and with which I must deal in all due caution, and with the best judgment I can bring to it.

Bancroft's ideas on the causes, significance, and prosecution of the war were explained fully in a long letter he wrote in 1861 to Dean Milman, who had written from London to request accurate information from his old friend. The historian's appraisal of the war, and his analysis of the problems involved in it, showed exactly where he stood and revealed a grasp of the situation that not many

men possessed in that first year of conflict. Slavery, Bancroft told Milman, was obviously the primary cause of the war; the institution simply could not exist in a peaceable union with democracy. But Milman must understand that the rebellion did not "spring from any element of a free government" or from any inherent defect of the American system — "The doctrine of liberty is proved true by the fact that it will not be reconciled with slavery." The slaveholders, explained Bancroft, seeing their economic stake in the South about to be uprooted by the abolitionists, had entered at least two decades before into a great conspiracy, ". . . designed to make amendments to the Constitution . . . , to attract the states one by one into their new Constitution, *all* except New England By excluding New England they would recover their preponderance in the Senate and have such weight in the House as easily to control the government." During Buchanan's time the plot came to its fruition, while Buchanan "looked on aghast and inactive." Lincoln's administration, "hardly suited for more than summer wear," was "not for the moment equal to the emergency." But the plot failed because of "the rightmindedness and honesty of the people"; the war was proof of its failure. Why could not the South be allowed to go on its way as a separate nation? There were many reasons, explained Bancroft. First, the Confederacy claimed all land to the Pacific, the avenues of approach to California, the frontier of Mexico, the border states, the outlet of the Mississippi-Ohio-Missouri waterway, the Bay of the Chesapeake, the Gulf of Mexico. In effect, had the North and West allowed the Confederacy to go its way as a separate nation they would have found themselves economically strangled. In the second place, the principle of states'-rights had been pushed too far by the South:

> The principle on which the separation was demanded, rested on a fallacy which would leave us no country, no state, no social band, it was the doctrine of individualism, pushed to its extremest limit.

Therefore "the common people came in to the rescue," rising to common defense of order, union, and social unity. The war was a people's war, waged against a cabal of slavery men.

Bancroft was aware, as many were not in August of 1861, that this was no ninety-day war. Nevertheless, the South, he felt convinced, was doomed to defeat, and the reasons he gave for his con-

victions proved excellent prophecies of the Confederacy's ultimate fall The South had no money or credit, he pointed out to Milman, and if it expected British assistance for purposes to Britain's economic advantage, it would be badly disappointed; "The South buys very little of England; the North consumes British manufactures to an enormous and ever-increasing extent Your men of business know this. . . " Neither was there unity in the Confederacy itself, nor could conflict between poor white and planter be forever avoided — "The South is essentially divided within itself. . . . All Southern white men are not slaveholders, and a party as yet unorganized and feeble but latent, and likely at any time to show itself cannot but see the ruinous effect of slavery," an echo of H. R Helper's thesis There were Unionists in the South too, Louisiana had shown itself lukewarm toward secession, and Tennessee had given an immense vote against it. Most important of all, the North had the manpower and the wealth to win the war, it held the positions of geographical advantage and controlled the seas And after the war was successfully concluded, peaceful reconstruction would rebuild the South upon a more solid economic foundation Cotton would no longer be king Slavery might be gradually abolished as the Negro, the product of generations of servitude, was educated for citizenship

Shortly after his correspondence with Milman over the emancipation of the Negro, Bancroft visited Washington to talk with Lincoln and the politicians concerning the progress of the war. The capital city was not an impressive sight. "As in 1800 and 1850, so in 1860," wrote young Henry Adams, "the same unfinished Greek temples for workrooms, and sloughs for roads." The dome of the capitol, half-finished, loomed truncatedly above the old sandstone building, the wings lacked steps, and of the columns sticking upward like empty fingers only three had their Greek ornamentation in place. Greenough's statue of Washington in a Roman toga looked over a miasmic swamp; Thomas Jefferson in bronze that lent a negroid cast to his features stood at the north portico of the White House and surveyed the half-built desolation of frame houses and imposing buildings that reminded visitors of the ruins of Carthage. Washington, surrounded by slave states, full of openly sympathetic secessionists, its existence as a capital threatened, was a city of turmoil and apprehension, dissolution heavy in the air.

Bancroft saw Mrs Lincoln on the 12th, finding her distastefully

arrogant and loquacious. Their conversation concerned itself mainly with flowers, of which Bancroft had many on his Newport grounds, and Mrs. Lincoln promised him a bouquet from the White House conservatory, as well as her autograph for his wife's collection. They both arrived at the hotel, and, wrote Bancroft to his wife, "Surely you will think the bouquet must have been magnificent, when I tell you it was a fair counterpart of Mr. Lincoln's brains." The city was alive with gossip, much of it malicious, and Bancroft repeated a story he had heard of the Lincoln household:

Madame wished a rogue who had cheated the government made a lieutenant the cabinet thrice put the subject aside. One morning in came Lincoln sad and sorrowful. "Ah," said he, "to-day we must settle the case of Lieutenant ——. Mrs. Lincoln has for three nights slept in a separate apartment." Things do not look very promising. It is well I am near the end of the page, or I might become lugubrious . . .

On the fifteenth of the month Bancroft saw Lincoln for the first time since the latter's election The President received him cordially, recalling at once his meeting with the historian in Springfield six years earlier "Have you seen McClellan?" asked Lincoln. "I will take off my slippers and draw on my boots and take you over," Bancroft liked the novelty of watching a President pull on his boots in the privacy of his own office, and the two men walked to see the leader of the Union armies, discussing on the way the possibilities of a slave insurrection in the South. At the General's headquarters Bancroft noted that Lincoln "began asking the servant if he could see McClellan, and then checked that form of speech, and sent in word who were waiting for him." The talk ran on indifferent things, the army, the prospect in Tennessee, the railroad recommended by the President from Kentucky south. Bancraft was not greatly impressed by McClellan. "He is one, who if he thinks deeply, keeps his thoughts to himself," he told his wife.

At eight the next morning he breakfasted with Salmon P. Chase, who lamented that he could not find money fast enough to meet the demands of the government. "His views are good," pronounced Bancroft. "His integrity and ability make him the first man in the cabinet." Later in the day he talked with Secretary Seward, who looked "dirty, nasty, vulgar, and low; used such words as hell and damn and spoke very loud." Bancroft thought him incompe-

tent and hardly of cabinet caliber. Sumner met him for dinner and the two talked about McClellan, who was in the Massachusetts Senator's estimation a brilliant military leader, an opinion Bancroft could not fully share. Later they called on General Heintzelman and his guest, the famous artilleryman Griffin, from whom they heard the story of the rout at Bull Run. On the seventeenth Bancroft talked to the Prince de Joinville and the French minister, Mercier, and the next day he dined with Seward, who was in a gloomy mood and who saw little hope of victory for the North

Bancroft returned to New York City in mid-December and took stock of the information he had gathered. It was to be a long, hard war; his conversations with the military leaders and with the cabinet officers, particularly Seward, had convinced him of that. Neither was he certain of the quality of Lincoln's leadership The man's unassuming manner, his choice of subordinates, and his seeming lack of a statesmanlike intelligence made Bancroft suspicious of him. He was not the only man in 1861 who failed to recognize the qualities of greatness when he saw them Washington was full of men who believed themselves to be better fitted than the prairie lawyer for the executive chair, and some of them, like Chase, never found out differently Others, like Stanton, soon knew the truth, that Abraham Lincoln was the single man in the Union fitted to cope with this greatest of national crises, the man who as an executive, as a politician, and as an administrator, was best suited to guide the destiny of the North. It took Bancroft a year to change his opinion, but although the future looked dark under Lincoln's leadership in 1861, it was to his credit that to him at the time the objective of greatest importance was neither criticism nor cavil, but the immediate and successful prosecution of the war.

The notes for Volumes IX and X of the *History*, the concluding epoch of the Revolution, lay untouched in Bancroft's study until Appomattox At forty-nine he had announced his retirement from public life to devote his remaining years to history, but at sixty-one he returned to serve his country as he could, by his pen, and to assist in the preservation of the nation whose development he had traced and celebrated in eight volumes On Washington's Birthday in 1862 Jefferson Davis was formally inaugurated as President of the Confederate States, stating in his address that a new government had been established, and that the Southern people had "rallied with unexampled unanimity to the support

the great principles of Constitutional government." At the same time that Davis was speaking Bancroft, at the invitation of the Mayor and Council of New York, was delivering the main address of the celebration of Washington's Birthday at Cooper Union. The war, he said, must be vigorously prosecuted. It was a people's war, a war to protect and sustain the people's own government, a war to combat a "conspiracy of the rich, of opulent men, who count laborers as their capital," a conspiracy which had "avowed itself a desperate and determined enemy of our national life, of our unity as a republic." Since that rebellion was intended to destroy "the virtue and durability of popular institutions," the nation of democratic believers must protect their government, must "sustain it, and hand it down in its glory and its power to posterity." It was an excellent speech which made clear to each listener his stake in the victory of Northern arms, one which outlined clearly and brilliantly, in far simpler prose than his usual style, the essential principles for which the North fought.

The year 1862 saw success and failure attend the effort of both armies In the West, Kentucky and Missouri were quickly lost by the Confederacy, and the Union forces gained control of most of the Mississippi and its subsidiaries. When New Orleans fell in the spring, opening the great Mississippi waterway through all its length to the North, Southern mutterings over the disasters in the West grew audible. The successes of the Federal troops in the Mississippi valley were more than offset, however, by their fumbling and unsuccessful maneuvers in the eastern theater of war. The year ended in a virtual stalemate, neither side able to break the stubborn defensive lines of the other with more than temporary success. Abroad, the diplomatic missions of the Confederate government ended in failure; neither France nor England, though openly sympathetic, was willing to act officially in the South's favor in the face of the aggressive policy of Lincoln's government.

During the war Bancroft supported Lincoln to the best of his ability, realizing little by little that far from being the incompetent statesman he had once thought him, Lincoln was a shrewd and intelligent executive, and speaking in behalf of his administration whenever the opportunity arose, which was frequent. To many, Bancroft's political position, as one of the elder statesmen among the discredited Democratic party, was a trifle vague. Edouard Laboulaye's articles, interpreting the war to French readers in the

Débats, classified him as an abolitionist Republican. John Bigelow, then resident in Paris, half-corrected the error, explaining to the Frenchman that the historian was a loyal Unionist, but that he would probably rather see the war "settled with slavery kept in the status quo," the latter statement, of course, entirely mistaken The Republican party in Massachusetts, noting his energetic public support of Lincoln's policies, believed him to have left the Democratic ranks and offered him a nomination to Congress in the 1862 elections, which he refused. He was still a Democrat, he said, a War Democrat, but "not a member of the party which made this rebellion" "The party of the South," he *explained in his letter* of refusal, thinking of Jackson and Jefferson, "is not and never was a Democratic party" He had no wish to change parties or labels, but he was interested in seeing the abandonment of political rivalry in order to expedite the successful prosecution of the war. The best method for accomplishing this end, he believed, was wholehearted support of Lincoln, regardless of his Republican affiliation; "The only possible chance for a speedy end of this war is in its instant and vigorous prosecution. There must be one soul in the President, the army, and the people . . Quick, united [illegible] nocrat [illegible] lines, [illegible] ve the vital principle of democracy which made parties possible·

Complaints are made against the administration, there never was and never will be an administration that does not require to be watched . . . Meantime, we cannot suffer the country to go to pieces because the President has committed errors. Let, then, the voice of this city and this district be distinctly heard in favor of an immediate, vigorous prosecution of the war. *I, for one, will not consent to send our sons and brothers to the battlefield and then betray them at the polls.*

But the fact that the President consistently refused to consider the abolition of slavery as a major war aim irritated the historian as it did Greeley and others in New York and New England, for from the first Bancroft had accounted slavery as the key principle upon which the conspiracy against the Union existed. His letters reiterated his belief that the conclusion of the war for the preservation of the Union could best be hastened by striking at the South

basic economic institution, and it seemed to him utter folly on the part of Lincoln and his advisers to fail to recognize that for the purposes of the war Unionism and abolition were one and the same thing, that secession and slavery would rise or fall together. He warned Secretary Seward in February of 1862:

Henceforward it ought to be understood that slavery is no more than tolerated in the Union. I hope you — I mean Congress and the President with his advisers — will this winter forever end slavery in the District of Columbia as an advertisement to the world, and to every part of our own country, that this is really and essentially a government of the free. . .

Again, writing to Chase, he urged that all possible pressure be brought to bear upon the President to convince him that the only way to crush the rebellion was to crush slavery. In April of 1863, speaking before the League for the Union in New York, he expressed more strongly the belief that slavery and secession were actually one:

It is an act of simple justice and historic truth, to say that the rebellion found not even a plausible excuse in the administration which last came into power. . . But yet, under all these circumstances, so infatuated was slavery, that it still passionately pursued its purpose, and for the sake of founding a Confederacy on a basis on which no enduring government can rest, aimed a blow that was intended to be fatal to the country and to the liberty of man.

The failure of Lincoln to act on the emancipation question and the confusion of thought in Washington over the problem of when and how to emancipate the slave, depressed the historian, who saw the war lengthening as the black man remained unfreed. He wrote John Bigelow in a fit of gloom:

There has been a very lax holding of the reins by the president; a want of discernment of merit, and a sad exhibition of political influences in the army. . . . Considering the waste of men and money we ought to [illegible]

Davis. 2nd. Let them go. 3rd. Reduce them by a complete overthrow of their system of slavery.

Bancroft was not alone, of course, in his opinion, for the cries of the abolitionists in the Republican party for the insertion of the slavery issue into the war were loud and urgent Lincoln, however, despite the pressure brought upon him, preferred to maintain for as long as possible the official position that the war was for the purpose of saving the Union. He made conciliatory gestures to appease the abolitionists within his party, favoring compensated emancipation in the District of Columbia and proposing colonization of Negroes outside the United States, and finally in September he issued his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, proclaiming all slaves in the rebellious states free after January 1, 1863. Nevertheless Lincoln's act did not wholly satisfy Bancroft, for the successful extermination of slavery by proclamation seemed to him doubtful. What was needed, he was certain, was a constitutional amendment He told General Schenck in the fall of 1863:

> In thinking of the future, I feel unwilling to rely on the President's proclamation alone for the termination of slavery. Congress has the power to make all laws that are necessary to the exercise of its constitutional office . . Could not Congress enact, that henceforward every one born in one common country should be born free?

The fullness of Bancroft's life during the war years is reflected in the amount and variety of his correspondence and the frequency of his public appearances As the chief authority on American history, he received many requests for information and usually answered them carefully and cheerfully. A New York correspondent wanted information about eighteenth century French settlers in the West; a Baltimore minister wanted a list of Hessian officers during the revolution, a man in Pennsylvania offered some interesting sidelights on the Whisky Rebellion; Francis Lieber, the German expatriate, desired information about early legal opinions on the citizenship of immigrants Other correspondents desired autographs; some wanted the historian to endorse their books; others asked letters of recommendation; and one hopeful musician requested that Bancroft sponsor his newly composed but never-performed symphony. In 1864 William Cullen Bryant reached seventy, and the Century Club, of which Bancroft had recently been elected president, celebrated the event in fitting style. "Our tribute to

you," he said in his address, "is to the poet, but we should not have paid it had we not revered you as a man. Your blameless life is a continuous record of patriotism and integrity; and passing untouched through the fiery conflicts that grow out of the ambition of others, you have, as all agree, preserved a perfect consistency with yourself, and an unswerving unselfish fidelity to your convictions."

Naturally, in the press of platform appearances, correspondence, and war activity, Bancroft's historical work suffered, and little of importance came from his pen throughout the war years—a pamphlet written for the New York Historical Society, *On The Exchange of Prisoners during the American War of Independence,* sketches of Edward Everett and of Washington for Robert Bonner's New York *Ledger*, a reminiscence titled *A Day with Lord Byron*, and an article on *Oliver Hazard Perry and the Battle of Lake Erie* in response to Bonner's request for a historical article of popular interest. At least once, however, he turned his knowledge of history to excellent advantage The furore over Lincoln's suspension of the *habeas corpus* led the President to request the historian to lend him support by finding legal precedent for his act. Bancroft replied with a summary of the British opinion in the case of the Earl of Chatham in 1776, quoting Lord Camden's remarks, "The necessity of a measure renders it not only excusable but legal, and consequently, a judge, when the necessity is proved, may, without hesitation, declare that act legal which would be clearly illegal where such necessity did not exist." "I think it important," Bancroft added in his letter to Lincoln, "if possible, to obtain the deliberate judgment of Congress . . . For one, though I think your position perfectly safe without it, I hope Congress will pass some bill." Later Bancroft's correspondence with Lincoln proved the instrument by which the authoritative version of the Gettysburg address was preserved for posterity. Having lent his name in 1863 to a volume of facsimiles entitled *Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors,* Bancroft asked Lincoln for a copy of his remarks at Gettysburg for inclusion in the volume. Lincoln accommodated, but his copy, being written on both sides of the paper, was unsuitable for reproduction In March of 1864 he rewrote the speech at Bancroft's request, his final version superseding three earlier and faulty ones, and the text was later accepted as standard.

The lines of cleavage in politics from the beginning to the end of the war were clear and sharp. The important issues — union, slavery, and the administration of the war — transcended party lines, and the customary party labels were for the time being useless. Democrats and Republicans of the several shades of sentiment agreed on the necessity of fighting to preserve the Union, but on other issues they were divided and subdivided as they had always been. The administration party, nominally Republican, was in reality composed of men who had, like Bancroft, been attached to many different factions, and the adjustment of their claims and their prejudices called for the most delicate diplomacy on the part of their leader, the master-politician Lincoln. As the war progressed and the old divisions of feeling faded, their places were taken by a new division, a split between those Republicans who were "Radical" and those who were "Conservative" concerning the slavery question. More and more, through the years from 1861 to 1865, the abolition controversy became the major point of conflict among the northern supporters of the President, until Sumner, Thad Stevens, Chase, and a few others emerged as the leaders of the Radicals, and Lincoln, with Seward's somewhat apprehensive assistance, held the leadership of the Conservatives George Bancroft's opinions, while in whole-hearted agreement with those of the administration upon the necessity of saving the Union, actually placed him with the Sumner-Stevens-Chase group with reference to the slavery question. When a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery was presented to Congress in January of 1865 Bancroft wrote to S. S Cox, the representative from New York, urging him to vote for its passage in virtually the same language he had used to Dean Milman in 1861, and in his correspondence with Seward, Chase, Bigelow, Lincoln, and others in the ensuing years:

> It is the part of justice It is the part of peace, nothing else will quiet the South . . . Punish slavery and then we can cherish the former slaveholder.

Bancroft's position during the war was of necessity a strange [illegible] three sides of a political
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thought of it as it had been in the years before the slavery question had split it. Until the outbreak of the war he had not been, in the narrow sense of the word, an abolitionist, though his antipathy to the institution of slavery had been clearly stated as early as the thirties, for his Unionism had always taken precedence over all other questions He supported Lincoln's war policies without adhering to the Republican party, agreeing with the President that the restoration of the Union was the primary war aim, but disagreeing with him in that he was sure that the abolition of slavery was the quickest way to obtain it. He agreed with the Radicals that slavery should be abolished at once, but the difference lay in the fact that Bancroft thought of abolition as a means to the end of restoring the Union on the old basis, and not as a means of insuring the supremacy of any particular political group, nor yet as an end in itself

It was clear, as the war drew toward its close in the early months of 1865, that the politicians of the North were choosing sides for a struggle for supremacy within the Republican party The war itself closed at Appomattox, but the war for political power went on, within and without the party. From the beginning of the war both North and South knew that, win or lose, the old order was dead. The Union as it had been could never be recovered, and even the Constitution over which they had fought had changed and grown. Both, as the war ended, faced their problems· the North, how to maintain control of the Federal government and of the conquered areas; the South, how to adjust itself to the new social, economic, and political problems which an unsuccessful war and the loss of its basic economic institution — slavery — brought up. In the struggle for post-war supremacy the South, bled white by the war, was no match for the clever politicians from beyond the Potomac with the army at their backs.

The Confederate who came home in 1865 found barren desolation to greet him In Georgia and the Carolinas Sherman's army had left a swathe of destruction thirty to sixty miles wide. In Virginia the Union cavalry had left a few blackened chimneys standing in what had once been the granary of the South. The port of Charleston was a city of empty houses and widowed women, of decaying wharves and weedgrown streets; Mobile was dead, Atlanta in ashes The Treasury Agents, he found, had come before him, on the heels of the victorious armies, to pick the cotton ware-

houses clean. The slaves, his sole labor supply, were gone The railroads were useless after the havoc wrought by Sherman's men. His currency was worthless, and he had no way to obtain more. All that he had was his land — land, and no labor but his own.

Yet, despite the fact that the land south of the Potomac and the Ohio had been stripped clean, it grew in importance in the eyes of its conquerors Economically the opportunities for exploitation of the South's natural resources were great, and capital from the northern cities was not slow in perceiving it. Politically the opportunities were equally large — at least two million possible new voters provided a huge new field of political exploitation, and the dominant politicians saw their importance too.

The question before the nation was neither simple nor clear although it could be simply and clearly stated. How were the Southern states to be reconstructed, and who was to administer the reconstruction? At first two, and later three, methods of rehabilitation were proposed for the war-torn South, and a like number of groups were anxious to undertake the task. The plans of Lincoln, devised early in the war and apparent in the wartime policies of his administration, clearly aimed at the restoration of the Union as quickly as possible and with a minimum of dislocation of the Southern society as it had previously existed He envisioned a presidentially administered and controlled system of reconstruction, and had carefully preserved at great trouble the wartime governments of Louisiana and Tennessee as nuclei around which he could build post-war governments for those states speedily and easily. The same legislatures that had taken states out of the union might as quickly put them in again; in fact, Lincoln's 1863 proclamations of Amnesty and Reconstruction allowed for the election of a new legislature in a seceded state when a mere ten per cent of the citizens of the state had sworn oaths of loyalty. "I shall do nothing in malice," he declared. "What I deal with is too vast for malice."

Unfortunately the politicians of Lincoln's party determined that Reconstruction should serve their own and their party's ends. They were eager to destroy the old South, to erase it and its society permanently from the map, to use to political and economic advantage the opportunities won by the blue armies. To them the
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Negro was to be made a political tool to insure party supremacy for all time.

The bullet that snuffed out Lincoln's life in Ford's theater threw a third element into the flux of Reconstruction policies. It elevated to the Presidency an intense little man from the hill country, a tailor's apprentice who had run away from his native North Carolina to become a political power in East Tennessee. Andrew Johnson, self-taught and self-made, rose from the lower middle class to mayor, to state legislator, to Senator, to military governor, to Vice-President of the nation, and to President He was a Southerner, but not from the South of plantations and slaves — he rose from the ranks of the great mass of Southern yeomen, and the twin guides of his life were Andrew Jackson and the Constitution. A hard man, intellectually and physically, he added a sharp tongue, a brusque manner, and a weakness for invective to his distinguishing trait of obstinacy. During the war he had breathed hate against the Southern aristocrats, and the Radical Republicans were delighted by his accession to the Presidency. But they soon saw their error, for the fighting tailor had his own ideas of Reconstruction. He was willing to join the Radicals in their attacks on the Southern leaders, but unwilling to pursue the subjugation of the South further along the lines of Congressional action. Instead of seeking to impose the pattern of Northern Republican industrialism upon the prostrate South, Johnson envisioned a presidentially-controlled plan which would rebuild the area into a new agricultural society founded upon the small-farmer, artisan class. It was not the vote of the newly freed Negro, but the vote of the heretofore mute and supine poor white upon which the reclamation of the South expanded. He was not unwilling to allow the Negro access to the ballot box, but as a states'-rights constructionist of the Constitution he opposed any attempt of the National Congress to usurp any of the powers of the states, including that most important one of bestowing the voting franchise. In a few months after Lincoln's death, the contest for supremacy settled down to a not-too-silent [illegible]

compassion, and wisdom went to the grave with him.

Bancroft's position during the confused months of early 1865 was somewhat anomalous — he had voted for Lincoln in the elec-

tions of 1864, but essentially he was more in agreement with the abolitionist policies of the rival Republican candidate, John C Frémont. His radicalism did not extend to the lengths of that of Sumner, Wade, Stevens, and the rest, yet Sumner was perhaps his closest friend in Washington, and rarely did Sumner speak in the Senate without a letter of applause from the historian. In common with the Radicals, he condemned General Sherman's treaty with the defeated Confederate Johnston in April of 1865 — a treaty proposed in accord with Lincoln's lenient policies of reconstruction which the Radical Congress nullified — writing to Stanton that Sherman's act was one of insubordination; it had "revived slavery and given security and political power to traitors from the Chesapeake to the Rio Grande," a judgment that sounded very much like that of the Radical congressmen who repudiated the treaty

In 1865 Bancroft had two choices he could go with Sumner and the Radicals, or he could join Andrew Johnson and the opposition. In April he made his choice. Asked to pronounce the Lincoln eulogy at a mass meeting in New York's Union Square, he responded with a glowing epitaph for the man he had once called brainless and incompetent Lincoln, he told the silent multitudes, would be remembered as long as history left a record; he had preserved the Union, and he had abolished slavery

> It will remain that members of the government which preceded his administration opened the gates to treason, and he closed them, that when he went to Washington the ground on which he trod shook under his feet, and he left the republic on a solid foundation

In words that must have given his conscience a twinge he praised the dead President as a man who, "scoffed at by the proud as unfit for his station . . . , pursued a course of wisdom and kindness, harboring not one vengeful feeling or purpose of cruelty" The significant portion of his address, however, came at its conclusion. Who could best finish, he asked, the tasks which Lincoln had begun of preserving the unity of the nation and of abolishing slavery? None other than Andrew Johnson, "the most conspicuous representative of the laboring classes," whom fate had placed in the executive chair "to consummate the vindication of the Union."

The incongruity of the alliance between the aristocratic Massa-

chusetts Democrat and the rough, self-educated Tennessee Republican seemed at once apparent, but in reality Bancroft had more in common with Johnson than he did with Sumner and his fellows. The reason lay in the political pasts of both men. Bancroft, from the beginning of his career, had been a strong Unionist, and his whole record showed a long and ardent support of democracy and unionism So did Johnson's; his support during Tennessee's dark days had been his love for the Union Both men were worshippers of Andrew Jackson. Both held the Constitution inviolate. Johnson's political creed, as evinced in his early speeches and writings — his belief in the worth of the common man, his right to rule himself, the divinely inspired wisdom of the framers of the Constitution, the manifest destiny of the United States to lead the world toward freedom — was woven of the same faith which Bancroft had trumpeted in his histories. Furthermore, Bancroft's views on the place of the freedman in post-war society and politics closely paralleled those of the new President From the first, the historian told Reverdy Johnson in 1868, he favored emancipation but he never envisaged immediate enfranchisement as soon as the war was won. The political franchise he visualized as a bequest to the intelligent and propertied Negro, gradually to be extended as the other colored men were educated to take up the responsibility of citizenship:

> Objectionable as it may seem in theory I was of the opinion after much reflection that a property qualification for them was that which could most readily be acquired and applied. . . . I believe that while it would be just and right to give the suffrage to the blacks in the free states where they have been free for more than a generation, the best policy for the South would have been to give at once suffrage to the most [illegible]

Thus when Johnson planned a party, built out of War Democrats, *Copperheads, old-line Whigs, and conservative Republicans,* and based on the old Democratic beliefs which stemmed from Jefferson and Jackson, Bancroft's choice was clear. He was no Radical, no rabid abolitionist, no old-time Whig, but an old Jacksonian like Johnson. The historian lost no time in writing Johnson, a few weeks after Lincoln's death, recalling a passing acquaintance

made in the days of Polk and assuring the new President that his speeches had won him friends and supporters everywhere, George Bancroft among them

Throughout the summer of 1865 Bancroft's political activity was slight. He and his wife rested at their Newport home, where his son John, now in business in Boston, came to visit them. George junior, who had lived in Paris on a yearly allotment from his father since his graduation from college, sent news of the recent birth of a daughter, Sarah, to him and his French wife Bancroft's garden at Newport occupied much of his time, and his growing passion for roses manifested itself in an increasingly heavy correspondence with florist firms, and he kept a gardener, George Hardwicke, to tend the blooms at Newport the year round. His nephew, Bancroft Gherardi, now an Annapolis graduate serving at sea, wrote him frequently, and his never-ending correspondence, constant through the years, concerning his historical work and his financial investments, rarely slackened. His account-books for the period of July to Ocober, 1865, attested to the flourishing state of his personal income — in the four-month period stock in the Iron Cliffs mines paid him $750, his stock in various banks, $258; the Bellefontaine Railroad Company paid $150; Boody and Company, his investment counsellors in Wall Street, sent him a check for $1,297, the sale of 100 shares of Norwich Arms brought $5,685; and Little, Brown, and Company deposited $1,448 to his account in payment of royalties on a new printing of Volumes I, II, and III of the *History*. Work on the unfinished volumes proceeded slowly, but it proceeded, the scent of politics was strong on the breeze that blew from Washington, and Volume IX, while not wholly neglected, could wait

By autumn of 1865 George Bancroft was once more definitely back in politics Stanton visited him at Newport in September, and the two men discussed the fight to the finish then going on between Johnson and the Radicals in Washington. In May, Johnson had made the first announcement of his plans in his Amnesty Proclamation, a document which, while following Lincoln's policies in regard to the leniency of the terms for the repatriation of rebels, excluded those who possessed more than $20,000 worth of property — an obvious indication of Johnson's plan to reconstruct the South through the elevation to dominance of the middle-class farmer and poor white. At about the same time the President began to set

up provisional governments for the seceded states, preparatory to their restoration to the Union, governments which drew at once cries of protest from the Radicals because of their clemency and their disposition to leave the requirements for suffrage and office-holding to the discretion of the states. "The safety and the peace of the country," declared one of the Radical leaders, "requires us to disenfranchise the Rebels and enfranchise the colored citizens in the revolted states." Charges flew thick and fast — that Johnson's governors were favoring secessionists against Union men, that Johnson planned to revive slavery, that Johnson had usurped the powers that rightfully belonged to Congress.

It was a strangely assorted group who fought Andrew Johnson: Charles Sumner, the Massachusetts orator who had a personal score to settle with the Southern aristocrats; cynical, revengeful Thad Stevens of Pennsylvania; Salmon P. Chase, whose Treasury agents had built up in the South one of the most powerful political machines in American history. There were others — bluff Ben Wade of Ohio, Ben Butler, the military governor of New Orleans; George Boutwell, Chase's assistant; "Blackjack" Logan of Illinois, the most popular of the politician-soldiers; Chandler and Howard of Michigan; Ashly of Ohio, and others. Most of these men represented the rising merchant class of the North, for whom the war had obtained legislation and influence which they had long wanted and which the Southern planter bloc had before prevented. They had no intentions of allowing the state of national affairs to revert to that of the pre-war period, and they ultimately had their way.

Bancroft assisted the harassed Johnson in his battle when the opportunities presented themselves, keeping up a steady flow of correspondence and advice through the summer and fall months and taking frequent trips to Washington for personal talks with his friend. War had not improved the national capital, and the historian must have sensed the change as he remembered his own days as a resident twenty years before. The removal of the surrounding army camps exposed the city's sprawling ugliness, and the lanes of bottomless mud that served as streets, a few gradually being paved with occasional stretches of cobblestones, trapped carriages and pedestrians alike in their mire. Barrooms dotted the streets; gambling houses flourished openly within sight of the capitol. The capital city had not been beautiful during Polk's time, but

it had possessed a different air. The tone of Washington life had lowered appreciably in the intervening years. Godkin of *The Nation* noticed it The only impressive thing about the city, he remarked in his sharp way, was the cleanness of the shirts in the House. The quality of the city had changed Wade, Halleck, Stanton, Ben Butler and Thad Stevens, even Andrew Johnson himself — these men did not seem to be of the caliber of James Knox Polk and his Cabinet

as he was, and the Radical group robbed of much of its strength, and leadership. Sumner, on his way to Washington in November, stopped in New York to talk to his friend, who besought him to be sensible about Johnson, Negro suffrage, and the reconstruction of the South Sumner, though he claimed "he was resolved to cultivate friendly relations with Johnson," was determined to have his say. "I did all in my power to calm him down on the suffrage question," reported Bancroft to Johnson, "and he admitted fully that the *President* could not have granted the suffrage A little freedom of conversation on your part . . . would conciliate him amazingly." But neither Sumner nor Johnson would accept the olive branch held out by Bancroft. Strong-willed, proud men, they seemed destined to disagree, and Sumner went on to Washington to become one of the Tennessean's most powerful enemies

The President's first test of strength, it was clear to all concerned, would come as Congress convened in December, and Bancroft did his best to help Johnson The President's message to Congress, both men knew, was a document of highest importance The Radicals were already organizing, and Johnson's greatest hope lay in a direct appeal to the people for support in the approaching combat with the conspirators Johnson knew what he wanted to say in his message The difficulty was that the President's political oratory, a product of the Tennessee hustings, was hardly the vehicle designed to make its presentation impressive. George Bancroft could simply say it better, and as early as October the two men entered into an agreement, Bancroft to write the message, keeping his authorship a secret, and Johnson to give it as his own Thus the collaboration was consummated between the mountaineer who hardly kn

letters at twenty and the aristocrat from Massachusetts who was the product of the best educational and cultural traditions of New England and the continent.

On October 24, Johnson wired Bancroft in New York, "I would be pleased to see you in Washington at your earliest convenience," following his message the same day with a second, "I would be pleased to see you on important business in Washington." Bancroft went immediately, and by the 29th was back in New York and hard at work; on that date Johnson sent him copies of two extracts from Jefferson and Fox for inclusion in the manuscript. By the 9th of November the message was nearly finished, and to Johnson's wire, "If you are ready I would prefer your coming to Washington at once," Bancroft replied in a letter marked *Private and Confidential*, "My task will be done tomorrow, but as no one knows what I am about and as I am my own secretary, I must ask a day or two more for a careful revision and for making a clean copy, which must be done with my own hand." When Johnson telegraphed on the 14th, "Come in person," not trusting a messenger, the historian went with the completed speech for a conference with the President and its final revision.

Johnson's message, delivered to Congress on the 5th of December, won praise throughout the nation. The New York *Times* found it "full of wisdom . . . , of great force and dignity." Greeley's *Tribune* doubted "whether any former message has contained so much that will be generally and justly approved, and so little that should or will provoke dissent." The *Evening Post* thought it "frank, dignified, direct, and manly." Godkin's *Nation* believed that the fact that it was the product of a Tennessee tailor without formal education was evidence of the success of democracy. Secretary McCullough called it "one of the most judicious executive papers ever sent to Congress," and Minister Charles Francis Adams in London, perhaps mindful of his post, was sure that nothing better had been done "even when Washington was chief and Hamilton his financier." To everyone the amazing thing seemed to be that this document had come from Andrew Johnson, whose prose had heretofore displayed no such grace and dignity, for the Tennessean, though a plain speaker and a good one, was not known to be a great stylist. A few suspected that possibly Seward had done it, and more merely suspected that it was not wholly Johnson's work. Neither Johnson nor Bancroft spoke, and the Presi-

XIII.

It is not probable, that any one of the peers,

had heard of the country beyond the Alleghanies,

of the banks of rivers that flow to the Tennessee,

or the settlements already thriving on the Fork of Holston or

the Watauga. Yet the Lands of that region, most of them sturdy Presbyterians of

the Scotch Irish Stamp, on that

same day met in Council

near Abingdon, [illegible] congregation of Presbyterians of Scotch [illegible]

Charles Cummings [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible], adhered unanimously to the Association of

Congress. [illegible] named their committee, [illegible]

first of Charles Cummings their minister, then of

Preston, Christian, Arthur Campbell, John Campbell,

[illegible] Shelby and others. They felt that they had a country;

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Force 2. Series. 122 129.

THE FIRST STAGE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE *HISTORY*

The original draft of a page (reduced) in Bancroft's hand

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creation and as wide as humanity. The idea of human freedom
had in all ages proved its reality, it roamed
the plains of Arabia with the patriarchs, and
taught their descendants to break the shackles
of the slave, it was the secret counsellor of
Solon as he reformed the institutions of Athens;
it softened the austere laws of Rome [illegible]
[illegible]
its ~~cheering~~ light flashed across the gloom of the darkest
centuries [illegible]
~~the darkest ages, and there never was an age~~
[illegible] some few [illegible]
in which it had not revealed bright glimpses
[illegible]
~~of its lustre~~, though as yet it had nowhere
appeared successfully as the formative principle tendency
of society. But now in America it was
the

SECOND STAGE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE HISTORY
The first draft has been copied by a secretary and further revisions made by the author

dent filed the manuscript, written in the historian's flowing script, with his papers, where its secret lay hidden for nearly half a century.

The address itself, had it been examined closely, betrayed but slight evidence of its double authorship. Bancroft's part in its preparation had been to throw Johnson's ideas, most of them adapted from his earlier speeches on the Union and the Constitution, into a connected and attractive whole, providing felicitous phrases, smooth styling, and a more polished oratorical manner than the President possessed The flowing and easy introductory paragraph was clearly Bancroft's work, while the body of the message was composed of fragments of Johnson's speeches, dating as far back as the forties, and of fourteen purely technical paragraphs relating to the work of various governmental departments, in the composition of which Bancroft's assistance was unnecessary. At the close of the speech, however, the historian's familiar style asserted itself, and the final flourish was a faithful reflection of his own prose. The next to the last paragraph, with its eight successive sentences in parallel construction and its fervent paean to America as a land of tolerance, freedom, equality, and opportunity, came straight from the *History*, while the conclusion was pure Bancroft:

> Where in past history does a parallel exist to the public happiness which is within the reach of the people of the United States? Where in any part of the globe can institutions be found so suited to their habits, or so entitled to their love as their own free Constitution? Every one of them, in whatever part of the land his home, must wish its perpetuity. Who [illegible] now acknowledge, in the words of Washington, that [illegible]
>
> me in the prayer that the Invisible [illegible]
> clouds that gloomed around our path will guide us onward to a perfect
> restoration of fraternal affection that we of this day may be able to
> transmit our great inheritance of state government in all their rights,
> of the general government in its whole constitutional vigor, to our
> posterity, and they to theirs through countless generations?

Bancroft's assistance in the preparation of Johnson's message undoubtedly led to his being chosen as the official eulogist of Lincoln; as he had been for Jackson twenty-one years before, he was asked

to deliver the memorial speech before Congress in joint session on February 12, 1866 Stanton, wrote Gideon Welles in his diary, had been first considered for the honor, because of his close association with Lincoln, but upon second thought he had been rejected as too Radical, too little in sympathy with the reconstruction policies of the dead President. Whatever Welles thought, Stanton refused, telling Bancroft that "regard for my health required me to decline what would otherwise have been felt an imperative duty. You ought to perform it. . . " Bancroft, whose views were closest to those of Lincoln and naturally to Johnson's, accordingly was selected, and in January of 1866 he was busily collecting material for the address — L J. Farwell sent him a transcript of the testimony at the trial of the assassins, Francis Lieber wrote him a detailed account of Lincoln's relations with Halleck, the author of a new biography of Johnson sent him a copy to assist him in his remarks on Lincoln's successor, and so on.

In his best oratorical style the historian opened his address with a brief review of the history of the American union from its earliest colonial beginnings to the outbreak of the controversy over slavery, based on a variation of the long-familiar theme:

> That God rules in the affairs of men is as certain as any truth of physical science *Kings are lifted up or thrown down, nations come and go,* republics flourish and wither, dynasties pass away like a tale that is told; but nothing is by chance, though men in their ignorance of causes may think so.

Thus had America grown, a divinely ordained republic, drawing her existence from whatever that was good in the systems of former centuries: "The wisdom which had passed from India through Greece, with what Greece had added of her own; the jurisprudence of Rome; the medieval municipalities; the Teutonic method of representation; the political experience of England; the benignant wisdom of the expositors of the law of nature and of nations of France and Holland, all shed on her their selectest influence." Briefly he sketched the history of the antislavery movement from colonial times to the Dred Scott decision, to the time when a band of slave-holding, secessionist aristocrats had forced a war upon the nation, a war, he emphasized, "to establish a new government, with Negro slavery for its cornerstone, as socially, morally, and politi-

cally right." In its time of greatest duress the nation chose to lead it a man relatively untouched by any foreign influence, a man truly and purely the representative of the American people, "moulded," as Lowell said, "from the sweet clay of the unexhausted West":

> From day to day, he lived the life of the American people, walked in [illegible] ... was through and through an American.

No man, affirmed the speaker, was better fitted to maintain and preserve a government of and by the people.

The body of Bancroft's address was almost wholly given over to a chronicle of the events of the war itself, tracing the progress of Northern arms and in particular reviewing American foreign relations during the conflict Great Britain came in for some harsh criticism. The British government, "a government of land and not of men," had given "not one word of sympathy for the kind-hearted poor man's son whom Americans had chosen for their chief." Britain, "scoffing at the hopeless vanity" of Lincoln's efforts to preserve the Union, "hastened to do what had never before been done by Christian powers, and what was in direct conflict with its own exposition of the public law in the time of our own struggle for independence" — i e , England had assisted and encouraged the breaking-up of a sister nation But the strength of republican institutions, inspired and ordained by Providence, had won through in the war against hereditary wrong, "opening to the renovated nation a career of unthought-of dignity and glory." Palmerston, who had died shortly after Lincoln's burial, would be forgotten, predicted Bancroft; Lincoln and the state he helped to save would live forever. And well might Congress remember Lincoln's policy of forgiveness — "The states which would have left us are not brought back as conquered states, for then we should hold them only so long as that conquest could be maintained; they come to their rightful place under the Constitution as original, necessary, and inseparable members of the State."

Reactions to the speech varied according to the political affiliations of the listener. That evening Bancroft wrote his wife that he had been highly amused by the sensations it produced in "

assembled Congress: "The drollest thing was at a part of my speech, when in enumerating the opinions of Lincoln, the radicals would applaud vehemently at one part and the friends of Johnson at another . . . , it was like touching the different keys of a piano" Most of the Radicals, however, looked with suspicion on the concluding remarks. They looked like downright propaganda for Andrew Johnson, and Charles Sumner complained about the speaker's "adhesion to Mr Johnson's absurd scheme of reconstruction."

Except for those from the British and Austrian legations, comments were for the most part laudatory Bancroft, protested the Austrian Minister Baron von Wydenbruck, referred to Emperor Maximilian of Mexico as an "adventurer." Was it not true, replied the State Department with delicate irony, that in 1846 Austria had declared itself completely uninterested in Mexican affairs? From the British came a much more spirited protest. Minister Charles Francis Adams in London found his position embarrassing The British Minister in Washington thought the speech hostile and unfriendly, and on the 28th of the month Lord John Russell called at the American Embassy in London to lodge a formal note of protest. When Russell had been British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Bancroft told Congress, he viewed the United States as "the late Union," and he had made haste to spread his opinion of it as such throughout Europe, hampering Lincoln's diplomatic efforts a great deal. Adams wrote in some concern to the historian, begging him to explain or to retract his remarks. As for the British minister, replied Bancroft, if he had heard anything which displeased him he had only himself to blame, knowing that the gentleman might be present at the session, he had asked Seward to request him not to come. Lord John Russell he deflated quickly and effectively. Citing Russell's own official correspondence during 1861 the speaker proved that the Secretary had used the word "late" four times in referring to the Union, and with a touch of arrogance, he told Adams, "Pray send Lord Russell a copy of this letter, which he is at liberty to publish, and I consider myself equally at liberty to publish his letter, to which this is a reply." Nothing more was heard from Lord Russell. Gideon Welles probably expressed in his diary the general opinion of Bancroft's address, saying, "Some things were said which could hardly have been expected at such a time, particularly some sharp points against England and Lord John Russell, which I was not sorry to

hear." Sumner felt that the remarks were true, but in bad taste, that "at the time there was something wrong in such a speech when the diplomatic corps were official guests"

In the midst of the steam from the boiling political cauldron of the year 1866 Volume IX of the *History* appeared, the first half of "Epoch Fourth, The Independence of America is Acknowledged" The book opened as the words of the Declaration of Independence rang through the world:

> The American Declaration of Independence was the beginning of new ages. . . . As the youthful nation took its seat among the powers of the earth, *hope whispered the assurance of unheard of success in the pursuit*
>
> fade away from the memory of the human race

Primarily a narrative of military affairs during the early years of the Revolution, the volume covered the period from the Battle of Long Island to the French Alliance, a detailed study of the generalship, movements, and the engagements of the armies Believing, however, that history was something more than an account of military victories, defeats, and treaties, Bancroft included in his volume discussions of political and diplomatic events and their significance in the light of the conflict. He carefully analyzed the new constitutions of the several states, realizing that the future of the republic had depended upon them as well as upon the policies of the Congress and the movements of the army. In fairness to the enemy he pointed out how much of Britain's political thought remained in the rebellious colonies, how "her imperishable principles of mental and civil freedom" underlay the theories of government upon which the new republic was founded.

The author's treatment of the Articles of Confederation reflected his ardent Unionism, a treatment clearly pertinent to the Civil War and to the theories of secession which had fostered it Southern readers noticed the fact, and a reviewer in *The Southern Review* attacked the author as a sail-trimmer. The early volumes, wrote the anonymous critic, had praised state sovereignty, and Volume IX now followed the Republican party line; it was obvious, commented the reviewer bitterly, that Bancroft, like the "weak and

servile" Motley, was prostituting history for political preferment. The historian, of course, had done nothing of the kind, and neither had Motley. Bancroft had been a believer in the sanctity of the Union since Andrew Jackson's day, and the theme of the gradual federalization of the colonies had been present in his *History* since the beginning. The sentiment of unity, he wrote in Volume IX, had existed in the colonies from the first, but the war had very nearly snuffed it out. When the time came to form a government, what could have been more natural for the rebels, accustomed by a century of struggle against authority to rebelliousness, than to be "misled by what belonged to the past," and to take for their organizing principle the principle of resistance to central power? The Confederation was a union, but an imperfect and rudimentary union, one which emphasized the decentralization of power and one which "darkened more and more the prospect of that energetic authority which is the first guarantee of liberty." The young republic failed in its first effort at forming a union because it mistook authority for tyranny; all that the rebelling colonies lacked was a sense of balance

Volume IX illustrated Bancroft's sense of proportion in its tendency to look beyond the events of the Revolution itself toward their European repercussions, lifting them out of their provincial background. He included a chapter on the reception abroad of the Declaration, as well as long explanations of the twistings and turnings of American diplomacy. One chapter treated the highly important matter of American relations with France, another with Spain, and another, in a panoramic sweep, gave swift glimpses of the reactions to the Revolution in England, France, Russia, Turkey, Germany, Sweden, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, all of them giving new information garnered from comparatively untouched European archives. A long chapter on Germany, including a survey of its history since its conversion to Christianity, was frankly a digression, but one in which Bancroft felt justified, since German history was an unfamiliar field to many of his readers, and one especially important in the light of Hessian participation in the war and German migrations to the United States after it. In its total effect, Bancroft's story of the Revolution showed that he was among the first to recognize that the event was of worldwide as well as of national significance, that it had widespread and important effects in Euro-

pean political, military, and diplomatic affairs; his volume, the first to treat fully the War of Independence in all its foreign ramifications, was in many ways an inclusive history of the liberal movement sweeping the world at the end of the eighteenth century.

The historian's speech on Lincoln's birthday in Congress ended his participation in active politics for the year, and as it came about, for the rest of his life. There was actually little more that he could do in Johnson's behalf, and while the President fought the Radicals Bancroft remained a spectator and awaited his reward. His potential benefactor was slowly losing ground to the opposition, which, as early as 1866, talked of impeaching the President and was carefully searching throughout 1867 for evidence of his misdeeds justifying it. But Bancroft found himself involved shortly in a battle of his own. Volume IX, treating the opening stages of the Revolution, dealt naturally with the near-disastrous military operations of the years 1776 to 1778, entailing criticisms of the actions of various officers and statesmen to which Bancroft, never one to veil his meanings, gave full and clear expression. The volume was filled with explosive material, but supported by the evidence of his great collections of correspondence and documents, his statements, he believed, represented the truth In 1859 he had had sharp words with Samuel Swett over statements made in Volume VII concerning Swett's grandfather, Colonel Timothy Pickering, and in the preface to Volume IX he wrote, as if to forestall criticism, "I have done what I could to learn the truth and to state it clearly; to the judgment of the candid and the well-informed I shall listen with deference."

Whatever the author's intentions, Volume IX stirred up a hornet's-nest almost at once. Joseph Reed of Pennsylvania, said Bancroft, had been over-friendly with a Hessian officer during the dark days of Valley Forge. General Greene's "infatuation" with dreams of brilliant military success had been directly responsible for the loss of Fort Washington Major General Philip Schuyler had plainly been a coward and General Sullivan incompetent. In fact, Bancroft did as neat a job as Richard Hildreth in knocking laurel wreaths from the heads of heroes, but, unfortunately, each of the dethroned warriors had living and vocal grandsons William B Reed of Philadelphia, former attorney-general of Pennsylvania and ex-minister to China, sprang to his ancestor's defense in 1867 with a pamphlet titled *President Reed of Pennsylvania: A Reply to*

Mr. George Bancroft and Others. Bancroft replied to the attack at once with *Joseph Reed, An Historical Essay.* Reed, he said, was attempting to arouse prejudice and to puff up his family name; his grandfather was in truth a "wavering, selfish, vacillating trimmer, full of duplicity." (In 1876 Bancroft anticlimactically discovered that the name of the friendly revolutionist was Charles Reed.) Reed countered with *A Rejoinder to Mr. Bancroft's Historical Essay,* but in the process of refuting his opponent he made some remarks about Benjamin Rush that brought Rush's grandson charging into the fray. Grandson George Schuyler of New York joined the attack with a pamphlet, *Correspondence and Remarks upon Bancroft's History of the Northern Campaigns of 1777 and the Character of Major General Schuyler.* From Boston, via pamphlet and the *North American Review,* descended George Washington Greene and Thomas Amory in defense of grandfathers Green and Sullivan, respectively. The entire controversy was too complex for Bancroft to handle at one time, and the tone of both defense and attack became increasingly less polite. It was true that many of the historian's statements, most of which were modified in later editions, often inferred motives not strictly supported by the evidence, but it was also true that the grandsons were unnecessarily sensitive about matters of clear fact. No doubt Bancroft's political affiliations helped materially in stirring up the ire of the aristocrats, as Swett pointed out that the author "was a late and sudden convert to democracy, and of course a zealous and unscrupulous partisan " In May of 1867 the harried historian wrote John Bigelow that the grandsons were "attacking him with sharp sticks," and that "public sympathy is rather with the grandsons, who belong to what is called 'the best society ' " Johnson's reward came in the nick of time.

The President had been searching since the beginning of the year for a suitable position to offer his anonymous collaborator. In February he suggested that the historian return to his old post as Collector of the Port of Boston, an offer that Bancroft emphatically declined, saying, "The law makes residence in Boston a condition of tenure, and I am not willing to transfer my home to that city even if otherwise the office were agreeable to me." He remembered too well his repudiation by Beacon Street twenty years before Though time had cooled the heat of Boston toward Jacksonism, the wholehearted adherence of Massachusetts to the cause of

Sumner and Radical politics would hardly have made a Johnsonian appointee acceptable. A diplomatic mission was more to Bancroft's taste, he informed the President. Johnson responded with an offer of the mission to Austria, where John Lothrop Motley was the incumbent minister, but not wishing to displace his brother historian and former pupil, Bancroft again refused. The diplomatic post he really coveted was that at Berlin. Pleasant memories had remained with him for half a century of Gottingen and the Prussian capital; he had an excellent knowledge of the language, a familiarity with German manners and customs, a nature well fitted to understand the Prussian character, and a reputation that assured his instant acceptance into the inner circle of intellectual, social, and political life. Since 1865 he had been especially interested in the trend of events in Germany, for it seemed to him that the tendency of its petty, warring states toward unity formed a historical parallel with the gradual federalization of the American colonies, and he wished to study the movements toward union, as exemplified in Germany, at first hand There was probably no man in America better fitted, by training and temperament, for the position, and in April he discussed the matter with John Bigelow, who urged him to confer with Johnson concerning an appointment He did, and on May 17 of 1867 Bigelow received a note marked *private and personal* "On the matter on which we spoke, there is no need of words in certain quarters, the matter *having been and being*, certainly within my own choice. But if I choose, of course, the private approbation of my friends and the public sanction become most desirable." Both were forthcoming, and in a few days Johnson officially notified him of his nomination for the post, subject to confirmation by the Senate. "It is the only office in your gift which I could accept with satisfaction," answered [illegible] promote the interest

[illegible] appointment, for the Radical Republicans who might have blocked it had no reason to suspect him Ulysses Grant, already marked by many of the Radicals as their president-apparent, wrote the historian a letter expressing his good wishes, and Sumner's friendship with him removed any lingering doubts Considering the attitude of the Senate toward Johnson in 1867, it was extremely fortunate for Bancroft that his authorship of Johnson's message remained unknown,

otherwise his appointment would have most certainly been placed in jeopardy A month after his confidential note to Bigelow, Bancroft rented his house to George Ripley, who planned to move to New York after the failure of Brook Farm, and took passage from New York for Hamburg, Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Prussia. At sixty-seven he thus entered upon the second phase of his diplomatic career.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Jacksonian and the Junkers 1867–1874

THE newly appointed minister's first diplomatic chore turned out to be in Madrid rather than Berlin Shortly before his departure from New York he was instructed to sound out the Spanish government concerning the cession to the United States of two small islands adjoining Porto Rico to be used for the purpose of a naval station, but his reception at the Spanish capital was so hostile that he informed Secretary of State Seward it was useless to pursue the matter further He continued to Paris almost immediately, finding time before his departure from Spain, however, to make a detailed report to the State Department on commercial relations between the United States and Portugal Before proceeding to Berlin he paused for a rest in Paris, renewing acquaintance with the French scholars and politicians who had befriended him in his earlier diplomatic years. France, he wrote Johnson encouragingly, thought well of him and of the United States, despite the straining of diplomatic relations a few years before by Maximilian in Mexico, Thiers and many others had spoken favorably of the clemency displayed toward Jefferson Davis as well as of the tolerant policies of Johnsonian reconstruction. After testing the opinion of Paris, Bancroft arrived in Berlin in the first week of August, 1867, to find Germany on the verge of a crucial series of events

The tendency toward unity among the several petty German states that Bancroft had noted with curiosity and interest was about to be concluded in 1867. Since the days of Frederick the Great, Prussia, among the German king-states, had slowly emerged as the central point about which the lesser states gravitated, and by mid-century Prussia, after the failure of the revolutions of 1848, had declared itself committed to the formation of an Empire under

its leadership. King William's appointment of Bismarck as his minister in 1862 served notice on the world that Prussia had come of age, and the events which followed bore out the truth of Bismarck's assertion that the great questions of the German future would be "settled by blood and iron." Doubting that the dissolution of the old and weak Confederacy set up by Metternich and the reorganization of a unified Germany could be accomplished without the ejection by military force of Austrian influence, he prepared for war from the moment of his appointment, isolating Austria by clever diplomacy and with the help of Moltke and Roon building against her the most powerful army in Europe. His sudden announcement of a proposal to reorganize the Germanic Confederation into a more tightly-bound union, added to a dispute over the control of Schleswig-Holstein, precipitated a seven-week war with Austria in 1866, a war in which the Prussian Army administered a crushing defeat to the Austrians and their minor German allies at Sadowa. By the treaty of August, 1866, Austria acknowledged her exclusion from German affairs and Prussia's right to form a new German union of the twenty-two states lying north of the river Main. The first step toward a German nation had been taken. Under Bismarck Germany was becoming a *Bundesstaat,* a unified state, rather than a *Staatenbund,* or loose confederation, and Bancroft's arrival on the scene coincided with the final steps of the process.

The relations between the United States and Prussia were good in 1867, and Bancroft found no difficult or immediate diplomatic problems awaiting him. During the Revolutionary War Frederick the Great's sympathy with the American cause had inaugurated an era of good feeling between the two nations, and the great migrations of farmers and dispossessed liberals to America in the fifties and sixties, plus the influx of many Germans into the Federal armies during the war, had disposed Washington to a kindly feeling toward Prussia During the Civil War years, official relations had been equally amicable. German opinion had been preponderantly in favor of the North, for the Germans had had little interest in seeing the Union disrupted. The majority of the German intellectuals were abolitionists, and Federal materiel had depended heavily upon German foreign trade for support which it could not receive from Britain and France. Over half a century a flourishing trade had been built up between Prussia and America

American ships had established contact with the Hanse ports in the late eighteenth century, and from 1795 to 1799, during the war between England and France, both German and American navigation companies profited by trade with the belligerent nations through the neutral ports of Hamburg and Bremen. Young Americans learning the ways of business came to Hamburg to study mercantile methods, and Hanseatic merchants appeared in New York and Boston for the same purpose until the tightening of the British blockade forced their ships from the sea until 1814. In 1815 New York received a consul from Bremen, Philadelphia one from Hamburg in 1817, and by 1840 and 1841 fifteen thousand American visits were made yearly to German ports and forty-six thousand to American ports by Germans. The nineteenth century saw the traffic between the two nations increase and expand, and as commerce grew the intellectual ties grew stronger.

The thinkers of New England, especially, recognized their direct and indirect indebtedness to German culture *Die neuen Amerikaner* of Bancroft's time at Gottingen had dozens of followers, and in time it became difficult to find the American intellectual who had not visited Germany or who had not read his Goethe, Kant, and Schiller. Of the men who might have been chosen for the ministerial post in Berlin, Bancroft was no doubt the most pro-German His Gottingen education and the large Teutonic element in his philosophical thought predisposed him to sympathy with German culture His historical work led him to believe that at least part of the success of the American Revolution had depended upon German assistance and approval. The evident trend toward unification of the German states under William and Bismarck convinced him that Germany was following the pattern set by America Bancroft, who persisted in seeing progress everywhere, found much in Germany to excite his hopes.

The historian and his wife took up their residence in the Embassy at 1, Regenten Strasse, a rambling old house overlooking the Tiergarten, a grassy park eminently suited to horseback rides and walking. His stepson, Alexander Bliss, joined the family in a few weeks as an attaché of the legation, and, with the large embassy staff, relieved Bancroft of most of the minor details which might have occupied much of his time. The diplomatic duties themselves were not difficult, consisting primarily of writing reports of European political gossip to Secretary Seward and assisting Americans

in the troubles that often attended nationals abroad. Two samples from the minister's day-book illustrate the nature of his daily problems. One involved an American actress by the name of Morensi Duckworth who had been engaged by the Victoria Theater in Berlin and who, when the theater went out of business, was left with an unpaid salary and no immediate prospect of collection. Bancroft assisted her in obtaining a position with the Imperial Russian Theater in St. Petersburg and promised to see her claims through the courts. Later in the day a Westphalian official called with an earnest proposal to ship all vagabonds taken by the police in his province to the United States, thus clearing Westphalia of its indigents and enriching the American population, a proposal that, Bancroft noted, "received a pretty decided veto."

The Bancrofts found themselves involved in a web of social life in Berlin that equalled and often surpassed in activity the London society of the forties. Bancroft wrote frequent letters to his nephew's wife (Frederika, the wife of John Chandler Bancroft Davis, a young man who was rapidly making his way in the State Department), and the letters were filled with accounts of the soirées, balls, dinners, and at homes that kept the minister and his wife busy. Visitors to the house on the Regenten Strasse were numerous and distinguished The historians Ranke, Mommsen, and Droysen stopped to talk nearly every week; Bismarck, Moltke, and Roon called; Baron Nothomb, the Belgian representative ("the cleverest man in the corps"), was a favorite guest; young Bunsen, the son of the Chevalier of university days, was nearly a member of the family. American visitors came daily for assistance or for pleasure. The American colony numbered nearly 300, and each Sunday after services in the American chapel, whose pulpit was occupied in turn by one of the half-dozen clergymen always wintering in Berlin, the embassy served as a meeting place for the expatriates. The visitors' list, for example, kept by one of the legation secretaries, showed sixty-two names for the month of October, forty-two for November, and forty-four for December, an average of nearly two guests a day, not counting the groups which made regular calls.

The exchange of diplomatic courtesies naturally involved numerous engagements. The French, British, Turkish, Austrian, and Belgian embassies held weekly soirées, at each of which Bancroft or an emissary must put in an appearance. The engagement book for the American minister contained, lest any obligations be missed,

a complete list of all officials in the Prussian court, all ambassadors, all ministers, and all important persons whose goodwill was to be desired in an unofficial capacity. Invitations came from the Prussian aristocracy quite frequently; the Crown Princess called them to Berlin Palace where, Bancroft told his niece, the Princess, dressed in a travelling costume with a grey jacket, talked admiringly of Motley, Poe, and especially of Longfellow — an autographed copy of *Hiawatha* would cement Prussian-American relations for a decade. There were of course too the informal dinners at the homes of friends such as Ranke and Nothomb, dinners with good cigars, cake, claret, and beautifully gowned ladies playing Beethoven and singing *lieder*. Certainly diplomatic society was refreshing to an old man who liked pleasant company and good talk and the pleasantly aristocratic manners of court life.

From the first day of his arrival Bancroft was interested in Bismarck, who seemed to be, in his estimation, the logical successor to the much-admired Frederick the Great, and his conversations with the minor officials of the Prussian court were full of questions about the minister. What sort of man was he? How did he work, and how did he accomplish so much in so little time? What theories of government dictated his statesmanship, and what were his plans for Germany? Bancroft questioned Von Phillipsborn of the Secretary of State's department in this fashion in almost the first of his official conversations, and he recorded the answers carefully in his notebooks. It was important, of course, that Bancroft know Bismarck's character well, for it was with the King's minister that he had most to do. Actually the Chancellor was easy to deal with. He got along better with Americans than with the English and Americans who knew him well usually found him friendly, unaffected, and natural. The vitality of Americans attracted him, and his close friendship with John Lothrop Motley, whom he met as a fellow-student at Gottingen, predisposed him to a liking and a respect for them. The strength and purposefulness of Bismarck's character, as evinced in his career as William's Chancellor, fascinated Bancroft. Perhaps, he thought, the wishes of the liberals of 1848 might come true in Bismarck's Germany, perhaps he might become the Washington of Germany, unifying the nation by the force of his will and personality.

Bancroft's curiosity was appeased by a call from Bismarck on the evening of August 17, 1867, a fortnight after his arrival in P

and the long account he preserved of the conversation testified to the interest Bancroft took in his visitor. The two men talked first of Spain, from which Bancroft had recently come, Bismarck admitting that he had travelled but little in that country, but that what impressed him most about it was the intense nationalism of the Spaniard When the conversation turned to the other peoples of Europe the German warmed to the point He had a theory, he said, about races and peoples. They were to be discriminated as male and female, "the Germans are the male race, the strongest and most capable of application of mind, the female race including the Celts and Slavonians." Bancroft remarked that there were some millions of civilized Slavs in Russia; yes, said Bismarck, but one could easily identify them by their stature, ease of movement, and lithe grace. "What of intermixtures?" asked Bancroft. Intermixtures were of benefit to a nation, replied Bismarck; the ebb and flow and immigration had helped the Germans toward a greater capability of purpose and accomplishment. Suabia, for example, had been relatively untouched by it and had as a result produced a race of men unfit for the conduct of affairs of state and highly defective in judgment. Schiller, the Chancellor said contemptuously, was a pure Suabian, Goethe was a mixed German — note the difference! The worst of them all, concluded Bismarck, was the pure Russian; he had yet to meet the Russian who was capable of more than three hours a day of mental labor.

Two weeks later Bismarck called again, this time for the official purpose of escorting Bancroft to the King's country residence at Babelsburg to present his ministerial credentials. King William, reported Bancroft, received him graciously and conversed with him in simple and friendly fashion. At dinner, a wholly informal meal, the American sat at royalty's right hand, "as if at the house of a country gentleman" William expressed the hope that the United States and Prussia might always remain on friendly terms, and inquired after the health of ministers as far back as 1840. On the three hour trip back to Berlin Bancroft rode in the King's private railway coach, arriving with a very favorable report of the Prussian monarch's attitude to file with his dispatches to Washington. Not until later did he discover that his visit to Babelsburg had set the diplomatic world by the ears. Frederick the Great, he wrote John Bigelow, set the rule that no member of the royal family might receive diplomats except by especial invitation. Bismarck,

by taking the American to the King's country place to present his credentials, without William's expressed wish, had shattered all precedent. Certainly no greater compliment could have been bestowed upon the flattered diplomat.

Bismarck, of all the Prussian statesmen, impressed Bancroft most. Here was a great man, he thought, who needed interpretation to the world, such as that Carlyle had given Frederick the Great. At some time in 1867 or in early 1868 Bancroft decided to sketch the personality of the Chancellor in an essay, partly for his own satisfaction and partly for possible use in some future work on Germany. Bismarck, he recorded, was thoroughly "a representative of the German race," with something of the Emperor Redbeard in his love of freedom and his independence of thought, still more, perhaps, of Luther in his indomitable resolve. He was "self-reliant, courageous, daring, individual," "a man who loved solitude and study, yet a man who was capable of swift and decisive action, a statesman who did not fear new ideas but who saw in them with unerring intuitive accuracy the seeds of progress." He was "a lover of liberty," a great republican who, though the champion of the great mass of common humanity, realized that it was the duty of the aristocracy, an "aristocracy of worth," to lead in the world movement toward the freedom and unity of peoples.

The sixty-five-page essay on Bismarck, which was never published, reflected a confusion in Bancroft's mind about the Chancellor and his Prussian policy that was never cleared Bancroft in 1826 had declared the voice of the people to be the voice of God. He had celebrated in nine volumes of history the rise of the common man to the assumption of his natural right of self-government, and in his orations and essays he had proclaimed the people to be earth's highest tribunal in matters of art, government, and religion. Yet from the outset of his diplomatic mission he viewed Bismarck and the Prussian state as the liberators of Europe, laboring always [illegible] that Europe, in the late sixties, was [illegible] ational, [illegible] olonies Bismarck's racial theories, his obvious power-politics, his Junker aristocracy, all should have warned the historian that instead of witnessing the unification and the liberation of a people he was watching the evolution of a leviathan state, that instead of seeing another Washington he was seeing another and more dangerc

Napoleon. But for forty years Bancroft had written history to prove the existence of a divine plan for eventual world unity and freedom, and he saw the proof everywhere about him, so strong were his convictions and so clear were the historical parallels.

There were other reasons for Bancroft's failure to see clearly the actual portent of the events then shaping. He had always affirmed a faith in the common man, yet there was always a lingering trace of the aristocrat about him. He had told Kirkland that he detested "mixing with the mob," and he had written his wife with distaste of Jackson's muddy, heavy-shod guests at White House levees. As London had shown, he admired the trappings of titled aristocracy, the easy grace and cultured way of life it represented, and he liked the distinctions of monarchical society. On his daily canters on horseback through the bridle-paths of the Berlin parks, his groom and manservant rode a properly discreet distance behind — a strange practice in the light of the avowals of the dignity of the laborer and the mechanic made during the political campaigns of the forties.

Yet at the same time, while he served at the court of a king and looked with tolerance upon Bismarck's aristocratic political theories, he remained distinctively American, and took pleasure in a belligerent democracy that viewed monarchy with contempt, never realizing the paradoxical nature of his attitude. When Lord Loftus, Victoria's envoy, asked him with some condescension why United States diplomats appeared at court, by American custom, as if they were at a White House reception, "all dressed in black, like so many undertakers," Bancroft retorted with the old arrogance, "We could not be more appropriately dressed than we are — at European courts, where what we represent is the Burial of Monarchy!" But Bancroft never saw the real nature of the people with whom he sympathized in their struggle for nationality and unity, believing to the end that the consolidation of Germany was a step toward worldwide democracy and a blow for the principle a self-determination of nations. Motley, in Vienna, saw it clearly for what it was. Prussia, he said, was "a mild despotism, small doses, constantly administered . . . , of infinitesimal government pills."

Bancroft's wish to observe at first hand the unification of a people was gratified in September of 1867, when as the official representative of the United States government he attended the first imperial Diet of German states assembled in Berlin under the New

Constitution of the North German Federation, made possible by the successful Austrian war. Bismarck, after years of skillful maneuver, had achieved the first step in his plan of a German empire. The heterogeneous collection of North German kingdoms and duchies was united under the leadership and domination of Prussia, and Bancroft heralded the formation of the new state as "the greatest revolution of the century." The American Revolution was beginning to bear European fruit; "but for the triumph of the union in America," he wrote Washington, "it could not have succeeded in North Germany. . . . The present union of German states is the ripened fruit of nineteen generations of continued sufferings and struggles, and is so completely in harmony with natural laws, and so thoroughly the concurrent act of government and people,' that it is certain to endure, and is received with the good will, the consent, or the necessary acquiescence of every power in Europe."

Both Bancroft and his wife found life in Berlin much to their liking, and by the end of 1867, after four months of residence, they felt completely at home. The presence of his stepson, with his wife and small son, lent the embassy a homelike atmosphere. They went to the opera to hear Lucca, to the frequent banquets at the other embassies, and Elizabeth Bancroft, now a white-haired lady of sixty-odd, enjoyed it all thoroughly, though her health often required an early departure from many of the longer functions She had always liked the society of the court and it was her desire to be presented to her second Queen In December notification of the Queen's invitation to an audience with the American minister's wife arrived, heralded, her husband said amusedly, by "the most careful preparations — the best Paris gown, the loveliest headdress, etc" His own *Antritts Audienz,* the official audience of a new minister with royalty, had come a week before; the Queen and he talked of Goethe, whom both had known, and of his own histories, which the Queen unfortunately had not read. At Christmas they had a Christmas tree, the first the little Bliss boy had ever seen, and after the German custom the servants were called in to stand in a respectful line to receive presents with the family. It was a charming scene, Bancroft thought, the best Christmas in years.

The official duties of the minister consisted primarily of relaying to Washington information concerning the development of the North German Federation and of keeping the relations of the

two countries on a firm and friendly basis. Considering his enthusiasm for all things German and his intense interest in the formation of the German union, Bancroft's labors could hardly have been termed onerous. He knew quite well that Prussia aimed at the creation of not a federation but a German nation, including the unassimilated South German states, and he agreed with Bismarck that such a creation was justified. It was not certain in Europe, however, that Britain, France, and Austria-Hungary looked with the same favor upon Bismarck's plans. "England," Bancroft jotted in his notebook, "has not fully understood the importance and possibility of the union of Germany under the leadership of Prussia."

To Bancroft the evolution of Germany's unification seemed to be founded on natural law. He considered any attempt to disturb it a moral wrong. If Austria, or Britain, or especially France, fearing a too-powerful Germany, made any move to prevent it by the force of arms, there was no question to him as to where the sympathies of the United States should lie. Thus he suggested to Seward in November of 1867 that the President, in his annual message, "should say something about the progress of Germany and assert that from the American point of view the German states had the privilege of revamping their political organization as they saw fit, without foreign interference" He told Seward, in what were strong terms for a neutral diplomat:

> A war undertaken for the avowed purpose of preventing the peaceable improvement of the German constitution by the joint act of the German governments and peoples would be a war of revolution; for the [illegible]
>
> but convulse the world.

He wished particularly to convince the American State Department that a unified Germany would be far more advantageous to the United States than a loose group of petty states, and that [illegible]

lin and Washington he was promoting the welfare of both. The

object of his diplomatic mission, he told his niece, was simply "to establish friendly relations between Germany and the United States, based upon the identity of their interests" The unification of Germany under the Prussian hegemony seemed to him a realization of the aims that the liberal revolutions of 1848 had failed to achieve, the appearance in Europe of a federalized and ultimately democratic government resembling America's To his way of thinking, the nation was at the same point in its history that his own had been in 1780, and for the good of mankind its progress must not be stopped, the present state of Germany, he had told the Queen in his brief audience, was the result of three hundred years of slow evolution, and nothing must disturb it now. What he failed to see was that the state that Bismarck envisioned was not a democracy, nor a republic, nor yet a "United States of Germany" The liberalism and nationalism of 1848 had been divorced; only the aggressive nationalism remained and the ideals of the revolutionaries had been twisted and forgotten by 1867.

In the late months of 1867 Bancroft began discussions with Bismarck and other Prussian officials over his first real diplomatic assignment He had been commissioned by his government to conclude an agreement on the naturalization of immigrants, since for several decades the laws of the two nations had been at odds and the resulting differences of opinion the cause of many minor irritations. Prussian law required military service of every male citizen, a duty which was not affected by absence from the country. In the United States the common practice prevailed of considering absence and the intent or the assumption of any other citizenship as grounds for expatriation. The heavy migrations to America in mid-century therefore caused difficulties. If a Prussian left the country he was retroactively liable for military duty or punishment upon his return, no matter what his excuse, and for some years United States citizens of Prussian origin, returning for a visit, found themselves seized and immediately placed in the army, despite their protests to the American ministers. At the beginning of the Civil War the cases of such seizure had been numerous, but Seward, for obvious reasons of diplomatic expediency, feared to press the matter. Bancroft's ministerial predecessor, Joseph Wright, failing to understand the Prussian military mind, had labored to no avail for an understanding, but Bancroft knew better how to handle army men.

He discussed the matter with Bismarck, who was anxious at any

rate to maintain good relations with the United States, and persuaded the Chancellor in the closing months of 1867 to join him in drawing up a tentative agreement to be presented to the King and the departments of War and the Interior. Essentially the treaty provided that a citizen of the North German Federation might voluntarily expatriate himself by a residence of five years in the United States, provided he entered into naturalization proceedings in his adopted land. To discourage emigration for the purpose of evading conscription, Article IV of the agreement stated that "if a German naturalized in America renews his residence in North Germany, without the intent to return to the United States, he *shall be held to have renounced his naturalization in the United* States." With Bismarck's and the King's approval the treaty passed the Reichstag on February 22, 1868, although several members complained of the obscurities of Article IV.

Divergent opinions of the disputed clause arose immediately after the bill's passage, and Bancroft, writing in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of April 28, explained that it should be interpreted to mean that the naturalized citizen who returned to Germany might be reclaimed by the Federation only if he expressly stated his intentions of remaining permanently. Although the legal squabbles over the controversial clause continued for some years, both parties were willing to admit that the agreement marked a progressive step in Prussian-American relations. With the North German question settled Bancroft found that other German states were willing to follow suit, and within a few months he had concluded similar treaties with Bavaria, Würtemburg, Baden, and Hesse. Noting his success, American ministers set to work elsewhere. Belgium made a like agreement in 1868, Great Britain in 1870, Austria-Hungary in 1870, Denmark in 1872, and subsequently most of the remaining European nations followed suit. To Bancroft, however, belonged the credit for obtaining recognition of the principle of expatriation now generally accepted in international law.

While the naturalization agreements were in progress Bancroft became better acquainted with Moltke, the chief of staff of the Prussian army and the man to whom, more than any one else, King William's armies owed their successes. At a dinner given by Baron von der Heydt, minister of finance, the American minister seized the opportunity of speaking with Moltke, since he had long been interested in meeting the man who, next to Bismarck, was Prus-

sia's most famous figure. He found him to be "a quiet unassuming man, to be sure much older than Grant, with less fire and if possible more unassuming silence." At home afterwards Bancroft, as he usually did upon first meeting an interesting or famous person, wrote in his notebook a sketch of the man he had just met. Moltke, he thought, was "very modest and beloved by his army, in this resembling Washington." His distinguishing characteristics seemed to be "fidelity to engagements undertaken, a thoughtfulness of others, and a care for the army, calm and exact observation with the power of swiftly coming to his conclusions, a tranquil mind, glowing with increasing fervor in time of effort or danger." He formed a perfect foil and teammate to Bismarck, thought Bancroft — logical and unhurried in contrast to Bismarck's swift intuitive judgment, calm where the other was vehement and intense — yet both men were expert at making things bend to one great end, and neither was a man easily diverted from a purpose

The news from Washington that spring to the effect that Andrew Johnson had lost his battle with the Radicals in Congress [illegible] the President's friend and adviser in Ber-
[illegible] Johnson
[illegible] from his
Cabinet, an act which immediately afforded Stevens and his followers an opportunity. The Tenure of Office Act, a bill designed to prevent Johnson from dismissing Radical officeholders, had been violated, and without hesitation the House voted to impeach the President on eleven counts and to bestow the chief executive's position upon Ben Wade, the next in succession. The Radical strength in the Senate was sufficient to concur with the House vote, but the obviously predetermined result and the farcical trial stirred up such public resentment that the Radical votes faded swiftly away, leaving Johnson in office by a single vote. The sounds of the struggle echoed but faintly in Bancroft's ears; he was safe in Berlin, secure for the time at least in a position he liked and whose duties he discharged ably. The only effect of the struggle for power in Washington upon Bancroft at the time, and that a secondary one, was the resignation of his stepson from his post as legation secretary, forced by what Bancroft termed "an unlucky clause, smuggled into an appropriation bill." At that, in his position there was little he could do to help Johnson. He could and did, however, sway the sentiment of the Prussian court in Johnson's favor,

not a difficult feat, since even at that distance the trial appeared to be plainly partisan. "The fairest-minded and ablest statesmen," he wrote, ". . . were not able to see sufficient reason for the arraignment of Andrew Johnson." Neither could Bancroft; Johnson was honest and a strict constitutionalist, which was sufficient for him He wrote after the vote to impeach Johnson· "The man had faults enough, ambition enough; but his unvaried intention was, to maintain fidelity to the Constitution and keep within its bounds. . . . I then thought and still think him more sinned against than sinning"

The President's trouble came at a time when Bancroft, the duties of his post completely under his control, was enjoying himself as he had not been able to do for twenty years The moderately paced social life of Berlin was exactly to his liking, and neither he nor his wife found many unoccupied moments There was, of course, a constant stream of visitors to the legation on the Regenten Strasse, most of them distinguished, all of them interesting — the pathologist Virchow who dabbled in politics, von der Heydt, the Prussian minister of finance; Professor Magnus, the chemist; Ranke, the great nationalist historian; Maximilian Duncker, director of the Prussian State Archives and a historian of importance in his own right; Baron Nothomb, the clever Belgian diplomat; Georg Pertz, head of the Royal Library; Bekker, the editor of Plato and Aristotle; Señor Tenorio, the minister from Madrid. Bancroft argued Kant with the philosopher Tredelenburg (who admitted him "a good Kantian"), heard *Faust* and *The Magic Flute* at the Imperial Opera, watched Prince Karl Hohenzollern devour nearly an entire huge ham at a state dinner, and attended meetings of the Prussian Academy of Sciences Herman Grimm, the biographer of Michelangelo, came often to talk about Ralph Waldo Emerson; he had learned English in order to read him, and had translated parts of *Representative Men*. Bancroft and Bismarck amused themselves by watching the surprised shock of the old-line conservatives when they introduced Carl Schurz, the red-whiskered radical who had fled Germany for America ten years before. On Fridays, with fair regularity, the Americans domiciled for the winter in Berlin met at the legation. There were about fifty, Bancroft wrote, "not the young only, but professors from Ann Arbor and elsewhere, ministers of the gospel, full grown." On Wednesdays the *Mittwochs Gesellschaft fur wissenschaftliche Un-*

terhaltung, a society to which Bancroft belonged of seventeen of the greatest savants in Germany, met at each others' homes to discuss anything in the world's knowledge. In addition to such things, there was the *History* to be thought of — Volume X and the completion of the story of the Revolutionary War — and Bancroft found time to work in the Royal Library, the King's Schloss, and the State Archives, searching for new material. It was fortunate that his investments at home were doing well, he told John Bigelow, for his researches and his social life ran the ministerial budget to more than $6,000 a year

During the spring and summer of 1868 Bancroft began to know Bismarck better. The American was always on the list of guests at the Chancellor's infrequent dinners — they lasted only from five to seven, for the host valued his time and would not spend it over wine and cigars In Bancroft's company Bismarck seemed to relax and his problems of state faded away. Bancroft was, said Bismarck, "the ideal American minister" They formed the habit [illegible] ough the quiet paths of the Tier- [illegible] ny topic at hand, to Meyerbeer, or [illegible] otional thing with Bismarck, who rarely touched upon music or literature in his usual conversation. Bancroft was the only one of the foreign diplomats invited to Varzin, Bismarck's estate, and, except for Motley, the only American with whom the Chancellor was completely open and friendly Suffering from neuralgia and what he called "bankruptcy of the nerves," Bismarck found Bancroft's company refreshing and pleasant, and Bancroft found his frank conversations a source of knowledge unavailable to other diplomats Bancroft knew about Bismarck's correspondence with Garibaldi, the revolutionist who was attempting to unify Italy; he knew his opinions of Napoleon III and his thoughts on the coming French war, a war both he and Moltke deemed inevitable, he knew his relations with Rumania, Hungary, and Austria, and of the Prussian alliance with Russia, the admission of the South German states into the Federation — these and a hundred other bits of information, both important and unimportant, were duly and confidentially reported to Secretary of State Seward, making the American State Department probably the best informed in the world on European affairs. There was no hypocrisy in Bancroft's friendship, however, as Bismarck knew. The American's agreement with his ideas was sincere and honest,

for the two men realized that they thought in the same channels Moltke too became one of Bancroft's companions on his morning rides, and despite his reputation for taciturnity he became friendly and talkative in the diplomat's company "He is called the silent," Bancroft told his niece, "but with me he talks much and with openness." Moltke confided to him his anxiety over the relations between Prussia and France, and of the heavy responsibility of keeping the army ready to take the field at an instant, "if Napoleon should suddenly engage in carrying out his ambitious plans of aggrandizement for France." "Thank God," Moltke often exclaimed after one of his gloomy conversations on France, "you Americans at least are truly our friends!"

Through his close friendship with Bismarck Bancroft knew of his plans for the unification of Germany through the eventual inclusion of the South German states in the Federation, and he intended to assist the Chancellor in its successful accomplishment as much as he was able without committing the State Department to an unneutral course of action. While he had no intention of controlling the decisions of South Germany or of forcing it into the Federation, Bismarck told his friend, he maintained that it was the right of those states to form the connection if they so wished. The difficult portion of the negotiations lay in the maintenance of peaceful relations with Austria, Hungary, and France, all of whom, for reasons of national interest, might prefer to see the present balance of power maintained The goodwill of Austria and Hungary might be bargained for by Prussian promises of lack of opposition to the union of the two then in the making, but dealing with Napoleon was a different problem American and French relations were a trifle strained; Napoleon, with an army of occupation in Mexico, was uncertain how far he could go in reinforcing and maintaining it without incurring war with the United States. Could not the State Department, Bancroft asked Seward, avoid committing itself on French policies until the German question was settled successfully? Napoleon, he felt sure, could do nothing against Bismarck with the position of the United States toward Mexico left uncertain, and Prussia could proceed with its plans of unification without immediate fear of French intervention. Seward was favorable to the idea, and Bismarck was in Bancroft's debt for a bit of successful diplomacy.

In September Bancroft found another errand indirectly useful

to the Chancellor's plans. He travelled to Hungary, ostensibly to discuss a naturalization treaty, but certainly to sound out in passing the opinions of Hungarian leaders, Francis Deák the Magyar leader and Count Andrassy the Minister-President, on the proposed additions to the North German Federation. The trip itself was one, he wrote his niece, "of pure and unmixed enjoyment." He dined with Pulsky, the patriot, and talked with him about Kossuth; he went to a Magyar theater; he watched a queer, solemn funeral procession go by with music and banners, robed priests and burning torches. He attended an impressive Catholic service in the huge and ancient church where King Francis had been crowned; he looked down on the slow, broad Danube and its chain bridge from the spire of a Mohammedan mosque, a relic of the days of Turkish rule in eastern Europe; and he visited the famous Esterhazy galleries to see the two Murillos which hung there The cities of Buda and Pesth interested him greatly, the one city strange, slow-moving, and exotic, the other a busy, thriving river port "much like an American town"

Deák and Andrassy told him what he wanted to know, that Hungary was perfectly willing to see the South German states join the Federation, and that unless Austria introduced a more liberal government, its German settlements would lean further and further toward Prussia and away from the Slavic portions of Austria. He met Deák at his home, where the Magyar leader was conferring with the liberal party in parliament, some in full Hungarian costume with sabers. Andrassy, "tall, about forty-five years old, dark-complexioned, even swarthy, bright snapping black eyes, ready of speech, and very affable," he found to be in substantial agreement with Deák; there would be no resistance on the side of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy if South Germany were annexed, but there would be if the Austro-Germans attempted to join the Confederacy. The subsequent report to Seward made on Bancroft's return to Berlin afforded as much information to Bismarck as it did to the American government, much to Bismarck's thanks Except for Napoleon, Bancroft told Seward, the prospects for a peaceful settlement of the German aims at federation were encouraging:

[illegible] and they will not very soon [illegible]

of the unity of the German People, it can only be said that the danger of war is indefinitely advanced

Bancroft returned from Hungary in early November to find news from Washington that was disquieting While Johnson's trial had been going on the presidential campaign of 1868 had begun, and the Republicans had lost no time in choosing General Grant, long since gone over to the Radicals, as their candidate. Horatio Seymour, the nominee of the wrecked Democratic organization, proved to be no match for the hero of the Civil War, carrying only eight states to Grant's twenty-six The friendship with Johnson that had been Bancroft's chief asset during the years since 1865 was now a distinct liability. The Republicans would waste no time in dismissing Johnson's appointees at home and abroad, erasing every trace of Johnson's unsuccessful attempt to build a party about himself. Fortunately, the extent of Bancroft's co-operation with the Tennessean remained unknown, and would as long as Johnson's state papers escaped the notice of some investigator. The historian, also, did not forget that the president-elect at the time of his Berlin appointment had expressed his approval, nor that he possessed an influential friend in Charles Sumner

Sumner, now that his group of politicians was in power, held the fortunes of most of the diplomatic corps in the palm of his hand. Soon after the election he spoke to Grant and recommended that he and the new Secretary of State send or keep five men in diplomatic posts — Motley, late minister to Austria, to England, Marsh to Italy, Morris to Constantinople, Samuel Howe to Greece, and Bancroft to remain in Berlin. For the moment at least, with Sumner's help, Bancroft's appointment was safe. But despite Sumner's assurances of his comparative safety, Bancroft knew that his position was precarious. With a change in the administration of the State Department approaching, his reappointment might be blocked if his connections with Johnson were called to the attention of some of the more vindictive of the Radicals, and he realized that he must, when the opportunity offered, display as openly as possible his attachment to the party in control.

Bancroft's too-ready tongue and his openly sympathetic attitude toward Germany put him into trouble at a time when he could ill afford it. At a private dinner in December of 1868 the talk turned to France, as it often did in the days when the Prussian statesmen

wondered what policy Napoleon might pursue if and when Bismarck pushed the matter of German union toward its climax. Bancroft bitterly criticized the conduct of France during the American Civil War, and he ended his speech with the threat that America would express her dissatisfaction concretely and upon proper occasion. His remarks, and they were not the last of the same sort, were of course highly indiscreet, and when someone (Benedetti, the French Minister to Berlin, denied it) reported them to Paris, Bancroft must have regretted his tactlessness. The French protested vehemently to Washington, asking the offending minister's immediate recall, and General John A. Dix, the American representative to Paris and as pro-French as Bancroft was pro-Prussian, complained directly to Seward that Bancroft had embarrassed him exceedingly. Bancroft, however, refused to be frightened and offered no apologies. Turning the tables, he advised Seward that the policies of Dix were in error; France should not be encouraged, and the United States would do best to handle her with a strong hand. France was the belligerent nation, not Prussia, and if the two went to war America would lose some two hundred million dollars of German commerce and immigration. Anything that might be done to intimidate Napoleon, he concluded, was distinctly to the advantage of America as well as of Prussia.

Seward was impressed by his envoy's quick and positive reply, and the controversy dragged on through the opening months of Grant's term, with Bancroft, if anyone, favored by Seward and his successor in the exchange of letters Bismarck, perturbed by the possible removal of the most friendly and useful envoy at the court of Prussia, asked Motley in London to use his influence in Bancroft's behalf. "I learn from Paris," he wrote

> that they want to take Bancroft away from us on the pretense that he does not represent America in a dignified manner. No one in Berlin would support that assertion . . . He is honored by the court and by the members of the government, and has their full confidence. Bancroft is one of the most popular personalities in Berlin. . . .

Motley's strong recommendation, enclosed with that of Bismarck and sent to Adam Badeau, Grant's secretary and confidant, helped the cause materially, and Bancroft was retained despite Dix and the French. The historian had, of course, allowed himself to express

his sympathies far too freely for the representative of a neutral nation and he had been guilty of a serious breach of diplomatic conduct, while at the same time Dix's protest had been too immediate and spirited to be fully objective and impartial. The affair reflected credit on the discretion of neither man, although Gideon Welles summed it up too harshly when he wrote in his diary: "I have long since ceased to be an admirer of these men, and this correspondence fails to restore my former high opinion of either; the weakness of a driveller and the impertinence of a pedagogue are the characteristics."

The seriousness of the treatment accorded Bancroft's tactless remark reflected rather accurately the tenseness of relations between France and Germany during 1869 Napoleon had fallen rapidly in the estimation of the world since 1859, when he had been at the peak of his power, with Russia crushed in the Crimea, Austria beaten in Italy, Nice and Savoy added to France as payment for his assistance to Italy. The Franco-Mexican debacle of the 1860's shook the world's opinion of his genius for statesmanship, and the shrewd manipulations of Bismarck through the closing years of the decade lost him further influence in European affairs. Obsessed with the idea of founding a sort of European Confederation dominated by France and with himself as its leader, Napoleon had, with some doubts, encouraged the rise of Prussia and Italy as national states; but by 1867 he saw, instead of a subservient democracy, a great military and political power rising beyond his eastern frontier. A shout went up against the ambitions of Prussia; the South German states, traditionally friendly to France, must not enter the Prussian orbit. Since his appointment as minister in 1862 Bismarck had expected exactly such a reaction. Moltke knew it equally well, his predictions, so frequently expressed to Bancroft, were something more than ordinary pessimism. But both Prussian leaders were fully prepared for the conflict. Moltke anticipated another opportunity to test his military machine, and Bismarck was certain that war against a common foe would bind the North and South of Germany together as nothing else might. Clumsy diplomacy on Napoleon's part had already led some of the Southern states, long accustomed to regard Prussia as an enemy, to look with faint but growing suspicion on France, and the negotiation of agreeable commercial treaties with Prussia made many of them lean further toward Bismarck.

Bismarck moved swiftly and skillfully through the mazes of diplomacy, checkmating Prussia's enemies whenever possible and weaning allies from Napoleon. In the event of war, Austria would certainly desire revenge for Sadowa; Italy was friendly to Napoleon because of his help in creating her a nation; the South German states might cleave to France to escape the Prussian maw. Here Bismarck used Russia. As payment for help on the Polish problem he secured Russia's promise of neutrality, and if Austria took up arms, perhaps her active assistance. Napoleon and Austria, mutually distrustful, could come to no satisfactory agreement, for Bismarck played successfully enough upon Austro-German and Hungarian fear of Slav control to make Austria's alliance with Napoleon doubtful if war came Italy, after a decade of Napoleonic meddling, was resentful, and if the King were to ally with France openly his throne might be in danger. At most Napoleon could count on effective help from Austria and Italy only after war began and only if it began successfully for France. By 1869 Bismarck was prepared for war, awaiting an overt act by Napoleon that would lend some semblance of credibility to its inception.

Bancroft's primary aim during the early months of the year 1869 was simply to stay in his position. His appointment by and his friendship with Johnson and his part in the unfortunate Dix affair were disadvantages that very nearly outweighed his friendship with Sumner, his strong support from Motley and Bismarck, and his distinguished reputation at home and abroad Probably feeling that Grant and his first Secretary of State Elihu Washburne desired little more than some display of fidelity to the new administration as an excuse to retain him in Berlin, he made haste to reassure them of his loyalty. It was hardly accidental that on March 4, the day of Grant's inauguration, he held a reception and a banquet at the legation in celebration of the event, inviting Bismarck, four ministers of state, and several of the highest officers in the immediate service of the King The Chancellor consented to make the principal after-dinner speech, though he usually avoided such functions There were two good reasons for his attendance at Bancroft's dinner: he wished to assist his friend in keeping his post, and he strongly desired to cement American-German relations in any way he could.

Bancroft made certain by means of a letter written the next morning that Washburne received a full account of the celebration, know-

ing that his description would find its way to Grant. The guests came to the legation, he assured the Secretary, "not so much to a formal dinner as with hearty good will to take a cordial part in the celebration of an occasion in which they felt the liveliest interest." The leading liberal newspaper in Berlin, he noted, remarked: "The day on which General Grant enters upon his office . . . is regarded by the whole civilized world with sympathetic interest and with the consciousness of its importance," and the manner in which Grant's election was received by Germany was "only another evidence of the fixed determination of this people and its government to live in perfect harmony with the people and government of the United States." The same day a letter went to Grant himself, expressing the diplomat's congratulations and telling the President, "You have exactly that power which is required for the success of an administration, comprehensiveness of view joined with success of judgment and force of will to direct." The body of the letter was devoted to a businesslike report of the state of the negotiations over the Oregon boundaries, with reference to the highly flattering remarks made at the dinner tactfully saved for a postscript:

> Count Bismarck who had not dined out during the winter with one of the diplomatic corps gladly accepted my invitation for yesterday out of his desire to prove to you his regard I assure you we had a very pleasant time; I never saw Bismarck so much at his ease, and so full of mirth and frolic.

Whether it was the legation banquet or the powerful friendship of Sumner that lay at the bottom of it, Bancroft's position was safe and his reappointment as minister to Prussia followed shortly. Yet the historian's conscience must have bothered him slightly; he had little sympathy for the Radicals or their policies, and retention of his post perhaps seemed somewhat treasonable in the light of his friendship with Andrew Johnson and his long and honorable career in Democratic politics. But he preferred to think of himself as an appointee of Grant and not of the Republican party, explaining to his nephew Bancroft Davis that he and Grant had always held each other in respect, and that, after all, his original appointment by Johnson had been approved by the General long before his accession to the Presidency. He had therefore, in a manner of speak-

ing, been Grant's choice since 1867, and there was nothing anomalous in his reappointment in 1869. By the time Bancroft's expressions of fidelity reached Washington, Elihu Washburne was no longer a member of the cabinet, his five-day term of office having been terminated by his appointment as minister to France, replacing Dix. Hamilton Fish became Secretary of State, and John Chandler Bancroft Davis, Bancroft's nephew and the son of John Davis, Assistant Secretary.

The majority of Bancroft's reports to Fish during the rest of 1869 treated of the relations between Germany and France and the possibilities of preserving peace. From the beginning of his residence in Berlin he had been convinced that neither France nor Prussia wanted war and that both Napoleon and Bismarck would make every reasonable effort to avoid it. His reports to Seward in 1867 and 1868 had stressed the fact that neither statesman felt his position secure enough to withstand actual armed conflict, and in April of 1869 he discussed the matter with Count Benedetti, the French minister to Berlin, informing Fish afterwards that Napoleon was willing, according to Benedetti, to make concessions of a liberal nature in order to preserve peace Bismarck, Bancroft mentioned frequently, showed signs of strain Of a sensitive nature, he suffered during times of excitement — "Illness disturbs his nerves and unfits him for the conflicts of parliament and the contradictions of determined antagonists" Occasionally during the negotiations with some of the South German states during the summer of 1869, Bismarck, said Bancroft, went without sleep for two or three nights. In April, at the time of the discussions over the annexation of Frankfurt, Bancroft had him to dinner, carefully inviting only the Chancellor's most congenial friends, and, as he wrote his niece, Bismarck relaxed and laughed and talked, telling his host later that the dinner had been followed by his best sleep in months.

It was more than a year later that the moment Bismarck awaited came, and then through Spain, bled white by a decade of internal war. In 1868 Marshal Prim raised the flag of revolt in Cadiz, and wi [illegible] the decadent gov-
err [illegible] was as-
sur [illegible]
in favor of a government by constitutional monarchy. The p
was, however, to find a monarch. A scion of the old royal

an impossible choice. Italy would have none of it, and Napoleon would never have allowed an Orleans king on a Spanish throne. At length Prim settled on Prince Leopold of the Catholic branch of the Hohenzollern line, a distant relative of King William of Prussia, and on July 4, 1870, the crown was offered to him The news that a Hohenzollern was to be king of Spain electrified France with anger, France "would not tolerate the establishment of a *Hohenzollern, or of any other Prussian prince on the throne* of Spain" "It is our firm hope," continued Napoleon's government, "that this event will not be realized. . . . If it prove otherwise we shall know how to do our duty without weakness or hesitation." The temper of France was short and warlike, and Bismarck could not let the opportunity pass. The French cabinet sent Count Benedetti to Ems to obtain guarantees from the head of the Hohenzollerns that no such event might ever occur King William's hesitant answer gave Bismarck no satisfaction By judicious blue-pencilling of his telegram from Ems the Chancellor turned the King's conciliatory statement into a decisive refusal to negotiate further, and the French cabinet, reading Bismarck's version, swept into war as Bismarck hoped. On July 14 France declared war, and on the 15th King William and his council reciprocated. As Bismarck had planned, Austria, Italy, and Russia remained neutral, watching the trend of events.

The tone of Bancroft's letters and reports left no doubt that his sympathies in the war lay with Germany, and unfortunately he made little attempt to keep his personal opinions private. Certainly he represented no official attitude in the United States, and he should have been, both literally and figuratively, more of a diplomat. His first message to Fish after the news of the declaration of war reached him, dated July 14, placed the responsibility for the war directly upon Napoleon, exonerating both the people of France and the government of Germany. Lord Loftus, the British ambassador, reported that during the first days of the war, at an official dinner Bancroft made an impassioned speech in the presence of Thielè of the Foreign Office and of von der Heydt, minister of finance, pledging the United States Navy to the defeat of France if it proved necessary. Von der Heydt drummed his fingers on the table and said, "*Schöne phrasen.*" "*Nein,*" said Bancroft, "*er weiss es*" ("No, he knows it"), meaning the Emperor of France.

Yet Bancroft was not alone in his unneutral display of friend-

ship for Prussia Grant himself instructed Assistant Secretary of State Davis to inform the French ambassador that while the official attitude of the United States government was neutral, France must not be shocked to find the people themselves hostile to Napoleon. During the Civil War Prussia had been one of the few European nations friendly to the Union party, and the attempts of Napoleon to establish a Mexican empire during wartime in defiance of the Monroe Doctrine remained fresh in American memories. Then, too, many believed, as Bancroft did, that Germany was forging out a republican state against the wishes of the despotic Napoleon; the war to many was a sort of war for German independence. Charles Sumner, chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, was hardly more neutral than Bancroft, publicly calling Napoleon in 1870 "a perpetual encouragement to dishonesty and shame." *The Independent* of August, 1870, said that "He, and he alone, is responsible for the outbreak of the war volcano." Gentle Louisa Alcott wrote to her mother, "I side with the Prussians . . . Hooray for old Pruss!" Bayard Taylor, the translator of *Faust* and naturally prejudiced, wrote a poem, *Jubellied eines Amerikaners*, and the Boston *Daily Journal* published some heated verses by Charles Baylor exhorting sympathy for Germany. James Russell Lowell thought that the Teuton represented civilization, and that "anything that knocks the nonsense out of Johnny Crapaud will be a blessing to the world." George Ticknor judged the Germans to be an "honest, cultivated, faithful and true race of men." Emerson wrote Herman Grimm in Germany that "our people have taken your part from the first, and have a right to admire the immense exhibition of Prussian power." Such things led the French minister in Washington, Berthémy, to remark sadly of the Americans, *"Ils sont plus prussiens que les Prussiens."* The minister to Berlin was in distinguished company, at least, in his opinions, and he reflected fairly accurately the sentiments of many Americans in 1870.

On July 15, the day after the Prussian declaration of war and with Berlin in a turmoil of patriotism and excitement, General Moltke was Bancroft's dinner guest. He was calm and confident, the minister wrote his niece. The defects of the French army were perfectly well known to him, he said; its mobilization was slow and faulty, and the Prussians could form and move forward without fear of a precipitate invasion of German territory by Napoleon. In fact, he assured Bancroft, he intended to conduct the entire campaign on

French soil. With his troops moving into position that very evening the General sat three hours at Bancroft's table, hardly mentioning the war or its consequences, while stories passed freely with the cigars. Bancroft was tremendously impressed — "There was not a word of boasting, but his manner of speaking implied perfect confidence in the result. . . ." Such confidence was reflected in Bancroft's reports to Hamilton Fish, whom he kept fully informed of the progress of the war and the state of public opinion in Berlin. On July 18 he wrote:

> The Prussian army has been mobilized and every preparation is making for imminent war. Public opinion is more and more confirmed that the commencement of war by France is marked by frivolity and a disregard for prudence and international right Confidence pervades the whole people of Germany that the sympathy of the United States is with them. . . .

The next day he reported that he had heard the King speak to the Reichstag "in a voice half-choked with emotion . . . tears glistening in his eyes." During the same month he demanded of the State Department that American warships be sent to the mouths of the Weser and Elbe rivers to protect American commerce from a French naval blockade of the Baltic, and when he received no reply he repeated the demand a month later. Finally in November the cruiser *Plymouth* actually appeared at Kiel, but the United States had decided that the blockade was ineffective and the ship was recalled. A week later he passed on to the Secretary a warning that the French intended to order American-made arms through neutral Belgium. For that matter, Bismarck knew that certain American firms were violating neutrality — agent firms of the French bought arms from United States arsenals and resold them to France — but Bancroft advised him to say nothing of it, although Bismarck had already protested to Britain over a similar violation. Bancroft was busy keeping the relations between the two countries on an even keel and wanted no protests registered except through him.

In September Bancroft's too-ready tongue put him into trouble once more. Two months had practically decided the outcome of the war; Weissenburg and Wörth in August and the capitulation of Sedan on the first of the month following left only the isolated

strongholds of Metz and Paris to the French, and both of those fortresses were preparing for siege. It was the custom of Göttingen to renew the Doctor of Philosophy degree fifty years after its bestowal, and on September 9, a half-century to the day, friends began to call at six in the morning at the American legation to offer their congratulations to the minister. By ten the callers came in a constant stream, and near noon two deputized professors came from Göttingen with an inscribed diploma and a scroll of congratulatory messages from the faculty The Rector of the University of Berlin, with a delegation of scholars and a formal address, arrived soon afterwards, and the law faculty from the University came in a body. Moltke himself came to offer his good wishes at the legation. Through the day the house was filled with men in uniforms and academic robes, and at the formal reception Bancroft spoke gracefully for a few minutes to the guests, recalling the old days at Gottingen and the men he had known in Germany Wolf, Hegel, Humboldt, Eichhorn, Schleiermacher, and the others Later a telegram arrived from Bismarck, with the army at Meaux: *"Erfahre erst hier von Ihrem Doctor Jubilaeum Kann nicht versagen Ihnen meine herzlichste Gratulation zu senden, welche auch nachtraeglich freundlich aufzunehmen bitte"* Bancroft's reply became famous. He wrote in part.

I was equally surprised and delighted that while you are tasked with the work of renovating Europe, you yet found time to send me lately a [illegible]

more military glory than the wildest imagination conceived of, and in three months bid fair to bring the German hope of a thousand years to its fulfillment.

The correspondence between Bismarck and Bancroft was entirely personal, and Bancroft's remarks should have gone no further. Bismarck, however, made the mistake of giving the letter to the German press, and when the London *Times* reprinted it some months later the French immediately seized upon it The letter was hardly what a nation at war might expect of the representative of a neutral nation, and although Bancroft was writing in a completely unofficial capacity, the French obviously had a case.

Had the war been in any other but its concluding stages the American might have suffered for it. As it was, the protest reached Washington after Paris fell, and Bancroft escaped reprimand or dismissal. He gained, however, a great deal of French ill-will and dubious immortality in an entire section of Victor Hugo's *L'Année terrible*. Titled simply "Bancroft," a long and abusive section of the poem set France and Bancroft against each other:

> You insult her. Whom have you insulted then?
> She does not notice in her mourning or her festivals
> The miserably obscure and vague shadow that you are;
> Try to be someone, Tiberius, Genghis Khan,
> [illegible]
> [illegible] espised;
> [illegible]
> If not, be on your way. . . .

The revolution which swept France after the fall of Sedan, resulting in the death of the Empire and the proclamation of the Republic, left Bancroft pleased at the deposition of Napoleon and happy at the establishment of a new government. "I judged Napoleon correctly twenty-four years ago, and have never wavered in my opinion of him since," he wrote Washburne in Paris. "My joy is in the restoration of the republic; I trust it may have a fair chance to establish itself, may succeed and endure" As far as Bancroft was concerned the major objectives of the war had been achieved with the fall of Napoleon, for with the Emperor dethroned the last bar to the unification of Germany and the rebirth of French republicanism was removed. But despite his welcome of the French Republic, he remained somewhat skeptical of its future. Twenty years of despotism were hardly the proper preparation for self-government, and he had seen France fail once before at the same critical task. "The republican wine is there," he said, "but where are the bottles to hold it?" Perhaps the French should proceed less swiftly; his own historical studies convinced him that a republic was established not by decree but by years of preparation.

The decisive character of the events of July and August brought up the question of the peace which Europe and America hoped would be brought to an early conclusion and provided Bancroft with his most difficult diplomatic problem of the war. In the opinion of Britain and the United States, the reason for the conflict had

been removed by the fall of Napoleon. Germany had clearly won its war, and stories of French hardships, particularly in the besieged cities, began to turn American sentiment toward France as the war proceeded with no sign of slackening Both the British and the American press were for the most part opposed to any territorial acquisitions by Germany, upon the principle that populations must not be taken from a country without the consent of the peoples concerned. Charles Sumner of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee expressed himself as decidedly opposed to the annexation by Prussia of any French territory, and the State Department agreed Bancroft Davis unofficially informed Gerolt, the Prussian minister, that American sympathies would surely be lost if Bismarck insisted on any cessions of land, although officially the United States would not interfere.

But Bismarck's objective had been not simply the removal of Napoleon. He believed that his ideal of pan-Germanic security could be attained only by a complete conquest and the acquisition of enough vital territory to establish a safe frontier Although Bancroft privately saw little reason for continuing the struggle, he officially did everything in his power to support Bismarck and to sell pan-Germanism to Fish and the State Department. The time would come, he explained, when France would annex Belgium, exposing the German Rhine provinces to attack — could Bismarck be censured for wishing to annex Strasbourg for future protection, "a demand which is now in Europe not censured as extravagant"? The majority of his reports to Washington struck the same note — the war was to be properly interpreted as "chiefly an act of self-defense on the part of Germany with the principal aim, through better demarcation of boundaries, of protecting Germany permanently from renewal by her neighbor of those wars of aggression which had been numerous in the history of the past two hundred years"

The capture of Metz and the siege of Paris led the new French government to ask Secretary Fish through Washburne if the United States would join the other powers in intervention for peace. While Fish replied that it was not the policy of the United States to act jointly with European nations in the deciding of European affairs, he wired Bancroft to discuss the matter unofficially with Bismarck and to find out if an offer of American mediation would be ignored. Bismarck, who did not desire peace in the least, was evasive; it,

was not feasible for the United States, Bancroft therefore replied, to attempt mediation at the time. John Jay in Vienna protested — the war against Napoleon was over and the innocent people of France were suffering, America owed France a debt of honor for aid in her war for independence, a debt that could be repaid by an attempt to mediate an early peace. Fish was inclined to agree with Jay that a word to Prussia was justified, but ultimately Bancroft's view prevailed, Grant and his Cabinet deciding that mediation would be undertaken only if both warring nations accepted it. Meanwhile Bancroft kept up his barrage of propaganda. American interests lay with Germany, he explained to Fish, not with France, and it was to American advantage to follow Bismarck's wishes in the matter of a peace: "This war will leave Germany the most powerful state in Europe, and the most free; its friendship is, therefore, most important to us; and has its foundations in history and nature."

The delicate balance of diplomatic relations which Bancroft had managed to set up was very nearly upset by Baron Gerolt, the Prussian envoy in Washington. Gerolt failed to realize that American public opinion could turn as easily and quickly toward the brave but defeated French as it had toward Prussia in the beginning, and the irresponsibility of his statements and actions brought increasing anxiety to Bancroft The Prussian had a habit of protesting violently and interminably to the State Department over minor matters, and he very nearly caused a major incident by openly attempting to recruit American citizens in New York for the German army. In the fall of 1870, when Bancroft was doing his utmost to convince Fish that Bismarck's refusal to negotiate a peace and to disclaim any territorial demands was justified, Gerolt stated publicly that Germany's aim was the complete annihilation of France as a nation, speaking of the matter with obvious relish and in great detail. In desperation Bancroft took an unusual step for a diplomat in his position and complained to the Prussian Foreign Office that Gerolt did not voice his government's opinion and that he was doing his government's cause great harm. Bismarck acted immediately. Four days after Bancroft's protest he telegraphed to Gerolt, "Always emphasize that we are not striving for conquest but only for the necessary protection of our frontiers against France's future attacks. Always speak kindly of France's future." Shortly afterward he removed Gerolt and substituted von Schlözer, a more tactful diplomat.

The Franco-Prussian war, begun to prevent the unification of Germany, ended in the consolidation of the North and South German states into an empire By November of 1870 the Southern states had already accepted, one by one, admission into the Federation, and though the war itself was not yet finished, Bismarck thought the proper time had arrived to seal the contract In the last week of the month Bancroft attended the diet of the North German Federation to see the Southern states absorbed, the union transformed into an Empire, the King made an Emperor, and a constitution written and passed. The Emperor and the Crown Prince were beloved by their people Bismarck, as Chancellor, wielded power with a skill unmatched by any statesman in Europe The military, with Moltke as chief of staff, was the best in Europe, even then winning a war. A model civil service system, an exemplary educational system, many great universities, growing industries, and newly won national unity, placed Germany at the height of its power. Bancroft felt his hopes justified and welcomed the new nation with enthusiasm, it was not illogical to hope that under the leadership of Germany all Europe might follow in the path of national unity and republicanism. He wrote in his report to Fish at the close of the year, "In my former reports I have led you to expect for United Germany the establishment of the most liberal government on the continent of Europe; and all that I may have led you to expect seems likely to be realized In one sense, the new government is the child of America; but for our success . . . it would not have been established" A month later, shortly after Paris fell, the United States declared Germany a first-class power, and instructions to Bancroft of January 31, 1871, made him, instead of Minister to the Court of Prussia, Minister to the German Empire.

The nearer peace in the Franco-Prussian War approached, the less America seemed interested in it After the outspoken opposition of a few months before to the annexation of French territory by the victors, the terms arranged in February excited little comment in the United States. Bancroft's instructions of January merely expressed the hope that the Empire would become "a force for liberty and democracy and for the assurance of peace in Europe," and although the French minister in Washington sought to convince Fish that the Department of State should issue an official statement regarding the German peace terms, the Secretary re-

fused to do so The United States, true to its policy of non-interference in the affairs of Europe, would make no attempt, said Fish, to influence the conditions of the peace, whether they contained territorial demands or not, but he instructed Bancroft to work unofficially for such a peace as would correspond to German wishes and yet which would be honorable to a friendly nation.

When the preliminary peace was signed in February, France was bound to cede Alsace and eastern Lorraine, including Metz and Strasbourg, and to pay a war indemnity of five billion francs. John Bigelow thought the terms quite reasonable. William Webster, the consul at Frankfurt, prophesied to Fish that Alsace-Lorraine would benefit from German rule and would in time adjust herself to it. The oracular *North American Review* decided that Germany was in any case the intellectual leader of Europe and that its political leadership might point toward a more effective union of knowledge and faith and strength on the continent. But Bancroft was disappointed, although few American voices were raised in protest. His sympathy for Prussia had never extended to the point that he wished to see France crushed and the chances of success for the fledgling Republic dimmed. On February 27 he heard the news and interrupted a letter to his niece to write:

> We have this moment the king's telegram from Versailles announcing the signature yesterday of the peace. The terms exacted are now known; the great difficulty was the demand of a large pecuniary indemnity, for what guarantees can be given for its payment? And to pay it in cash is not possible — the whole policy justifiable only by precedent rather than by principle. Alsace and German Lorraine with Metz go to Germany. France pays in three years five billions of francs. Hard terms!

But despite his suspicion of the justice of the peace terms, he felt that he had done his work well and that he had played at least a minor part in an epoch-making historical event. He had fostered friendly relations between Germany and the United States throughout the difficult period of the Empire's formation, he had protected American interests during the war, and he had assisted
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mellow ones. His outspoken sympathy for the German cause dur-

ing the late war, his worldwide reputation as a scholar, and his position as the representative of a friendly nation combined to make him the most popular and respected of all the diplomats in Germany. With his white hair and flowing white beard he became a familiar sight as he rode or walked through the parks of Berlin, or rode in his carriage through the streets, and the people paused to point out the figure of the dignified old man to passersby. He was now past seventy, but his years rested lightly upon him, his health and eyesight were unimpaired, and his slight, wiry frame showed little effect of the passage of time. He was still able to do a full day's work, although the piles of notes and transcriptions for his *History* grew more slowly than before, and he spent a few hours every day at his desk, writing in his spidery, nearly illegible hand, his head cocked to one side in its characteristic birdlike position, a likeness emphasized by the sharp blue eyes The duties of his office were not heavy, and many of them were safely relegated to attachés and secretaries, leaving plenty of time for horseback rides and social engagements In the decade from 1870 to 1880 political relations between Germany and the United States were quiet to the point of stagnation. The reconstruction of the South still kept the United States occupied at home, and Germany's own domestic problems kept the spheres of activity of the two nations separated

With the close of the Franco-Prussian War the major portion of Bancroft's diplomatic duties were over, and his subsequent reports were for the most part of routine matters. He assisted in the successful negotiation of a consular and trademark treaty between Germany and America, a treaty which aroused some criticism for its blunders of prose style, which were blamed on Bancroft's old age, but the truth of the matter was that the treaty had been originally written in Washington, and Bancroft, who knew better than to tamper with its wording, simply sent it on *in puris* for ratification. The expatriation agreements of 1867 continued to give rise to frequent problems of citizenship and a great deal of time was spent in adjusting cases and interpreting the various clauses. The five-year clause, with its declaration of intent, remained the chief point of disagreement with German officials, and the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, whose people had not been German subjects when the treaty was ratified and who were therefore not included in its terms, added to the confusion. The cooperative attitude of Bismarck and his government made the settlement of such

questions comparatively easy, for the Chancellor was as anxious as Bancroft to maintain friendly relations.

Many immigrants of the seventies, searching for some country where they could settle without losing their German citizenship, turned speculative eyes toward South America, a practice Bismarck hastily discouraged. He privately thought the Monroe Doctrine rather impudent, but he was very careful to avoid arousing American hostility on the South American question, an issue upon which, since Napoleon's Mexican expedition, the United States was especially sensitive When, after vainly attempting to collect claims against the unstable Venezuelan government, Bismarck asked the United States in 1871 to help by exerting pressure against the South American republic, the State Department ordered Bancroft to find out whether Germany's aims were commercial or political. The minister assured Fish that Germany was innocent of imperial designs in South America and that Bismarck knew very well that "the days of the colonial system have passed long since." Three years later, when the rumor reached Washington that Denmark might trade St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies for parts of Schleswig, Bancroft found it necessary again to reassure Fish that Bismarck had no political aims in the Caribbean.

Perhaps the greatest diplomatic triumph of his remaining years in Berlin was Bancroft's successful representation of the American side of the Oregon boundary dispute in 1872. Since the establishment of the line during Polk's administration the boundary question had been a constantly disturbing factor in American-British relations, and it was time a settlement was reached. The exact course of the line through the Canal de Haro was, as Bancroft had noticed in 1846, somewhat vague, and the right of the British to claim the islands east of the strait had been challenged by the Oregon legislature in 1852, when the largest island, San Juan, was included in one of its counties. Since that time there had been frequent clashes over jurisdictional rights, both Oregon and British Victoria claiming the islands, and an American suggestion in 1871 that it be settled met with British agreement

George Bancroft, the only remaining member of the Cabinet that had ratified the treaty in Polk's time, was the logical choice of the State Department to confer with the British representatives on the Oregon question, for he had been interested in the argument since the beginning. Agree to no compromise, he advised the State

Department; choose the Emperor of Germany as arbiter, submit the American claims in full, and allow William to draw the final boundary as he sees fit. Accordingly, in July of 1871 the Emperor agreed to act as intermediary in the negotiation and Bancroft began drawing up briefs for William's perusal, with nephew Bancroft Davis lending valuable assistance in Washington Admiral Prevost, the British representative, found himself at a disadvantage from the outset. Bancroft's maps, made in 1846 by naval cartographers when he had been Secretary of the Navy, clearly showed by the soundings then recorded that the "main" channel of the straits flowed to the western side of the islands, placing them in American territory. When Bancroft had been serving as minister to London in 1848 he had taken occasion, during a discussion of the original treaty with Palmerston, to place on record a description of the boundary according to his own map There existed, then, in the British archives in 1871, an official description of what the boundary was in the hand of a member of the cabinet by which the original treaty was ratified, supported by an official contemporary naval map. Furthermore, as the only living American who had voted on the treaty in 1846, Bancroft possessed authoritative personal information to which Admiral Prevost had no access, an advantage that the American minister subtly pointed out in his brief. In October, 1872, the decision of the Emperor gave complete recognition to the American claims.

Except for the several months of labor connected with the settlement of the Oregon arbitration (Bancroft wrote every word of the brief with his own hand), his time for the duration of his residence in Berlin was very nearly his own. When his energies and his social engagements permitted, he spent his days in leisurely preparation of the concluding volume of his historical series The entire United States diplomatic service, as it had been previously, was placed practically at his disposal, and he drew upon the legations in England, France, Russia, Holland, Spain, and Austria for materials for his study of the closing phases of the Revolution and the peace. No longer able to do the necessary spade-work, he hired two secretaries, William M. Sloane and Austin Scott, both men who were destined to become brilliant scholars, Sloane as professor of history at Columbia and Scott as president of Rutgers, after serving their apprenticeship with the aged dean of American historical writing. At the time, Bancroft calculated, he had spent

nearly $75,000 on his historical work, and it was to cost him half again as much before it was done. However, he could well afford the expenditures. The nine volumes had repaid him several times over, and his various investments brought him handsome returns each year In June of 1871 the former charity scholar was able to offer Phillips-Exeter a $2,100 scholarship, and a year later he wrote President Eliot of Harvard to offer $10,000 for the endowment of a John Thornton Kirkland Memorial Scholarship to allow young Harvard men to study abroad. His ministerial stipend did little more than cover his actual living costs in Berlin, and much of the expense of the legation's social life was paid from his own pocket.

The brilliance of Berlin society in the 1870's was equalled perhaps, in Bancroft's experience, only by that of the Paris of the early 1820's Hardly a day seemed to pass without a visitor of interest to the house on the Regenten Strasse and when no visitors came, there were the daily rides through the park with Moltke or Bismarck and the pleasant conversations Mrs. Bancroft, long subject to respiratory troubles, spent much time at the several watering resorts or in the more temperate climate of the Riviera, and her husband's many friends saw to it that he had little time to be lonesome. Moltke came often to dinner Bucher (the head of the Legation Department of Foreign Affairs), Escosura (the Spanish diplomat and scholar), Balen and Nothomb (the Belgians), Mommsen and Ranke (the historians), Richard Wagner (the composer), Curtius, Helmholtz, Herman Grimm — the legation guestbook was filled with familiar and famous names.

The members of the growing American colony made regular visits to the legation for purposes both of business and pleasure, and nearly every travelling American stopped for a day when he reached Berlin to call on the famous historian. Motley, on his trips to the Prussian city, always called to pay his respects, and the two often strolled through the Tiergarten in the evening talking history. Young Henry Adams, adding another chapter to his education, met Mommsen and Motley at Bancroft's table and was duly impressed; although he thought the minister "extremely civil," the cynical youth told Henry Cabot Lodge that in his opinion neither Motley nor Bancroft were "men of extraordinary gifts." Of all the callers during 1872, General Sherman of Georgia fame was probably the only one disappointed at his welcome. The General, on a tour that had already taken him through Italy, Turkey, and Russia,

forgot to notify Bancroft of his intention to visit Berlin and as a result found no carriage from the legation to meet him on his arrival. After three unsuccessful attempts to procure a hotel room, Sherman's notoriously short temper reached his limits, and he was in an angry mood when he called at the legation the next afternoon. The following day a court attaché called at Sherman's hotel to inform him that he could meet the Emperor five days hence at a military review to be given for Italian royalty "Has the Emperor asked to meet me?" inquired Sherman. The aide admitted that he had not, and Sherman, refusing to wait, left in a flurry of injured pride. If Bancroft had not bungled things, if he had notified the minister of the General's presence, the visit would have been different, he complained Whether Bancroft was wholly responsible for Sherman's grievance was open to question, whatever his complaint. The General, it was thought in Berlin, had been connected with the sale and shipment of United States arms to France during the War of 1870, and the feelings of the court were distinctly cold toward him.

Partially for the benefit of his wife, whose frail health stood the rigors of a Prussian winter precariously, and partially because he felt that the days of his residence abroad were numbered, Bancroft took advantage of the slackness of legation business to embark on a tour of the warmer countries of the Near East in 1872 After a leisurely journey through the popular Italian watering-places in October, the two reached the Hôtel des Etrangers in Athens in November, where they met Consul Francis, who secured them an audience with King George I of Greece and Queen Olga — "a well-mannered and well-disposed young couple," in Mrs. Bancroft's opinion. George Boker, the playright and poet who had been made [illegible] and with Boker and his [illegible] rvey *the ruins of an-* [illegible] ey visited the battlefields of Marathon and Eleusis, and with the Bokers they proceeded to Constantinople, visiting Christian *mission schools, conversing* with the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church, dining with the Sultan Abdul-Aziz, who served them thick Turkish coffee in cups wreathed with diamonds.

Early December found the minister and his wife in Egypt. They landed at Alexandria on the third of the month to be met by the consular *representatives* who had arranged their itinerary, which

included Cleopatra's Needle, Pompey's Pillar, an Arab wedding festival, Cairo, the tomb of Mehemet Ali, a trip up the Nile to the Pyramids, a journey through the native quarters and the market-place. In Cairo Bancroft secured an audience with the Khedive, Ismail Pasha, who was introducing Western reforms into Egypt as fast as he was able, a ruler whose extravagance and mismanagement led to his removal and the initiation of Anglo-French control of the country four years later. At Cairo too he met Charles Pomeroy Stone, late of the United States Army, a colorful soldier of fortune who had taken a commission in the Egyptian Army in 1870 and who, after reorganizing it, became the Pasha's chief of staff. A few days later Ralph Waldo Emerson, on his third tour of Europe, arrived in Cairo with his daughter Ellen, and the two New England families did their sightseeing together Bancroft was, Emerson wrote, "a chivalrous angel to Ellen and me," with full appreciation not only of his companionship but of the historian's gift of a thousand dollars to compensate partially for the loss of his house by fire two months before. For five days the Bancrofts and the Emersons saw the sights of Egypt, climaxing their stay by a breakfast at the Khedive's palace. In mid-December they parted company, Bancroft and his wife taking sail for Italy and Rome and reaching Berlin once more in January of 1873.

Bancroft's Mediterranean tour was, with the exception of an occasional visit to some of the nearby German resorts, his last view of Europe In 1873 he felt that he had been absent from America long enough. He was seventy-three years old, his wife's health was failing, his great historical project was still unfinished, and seven distinguished years abroad in the service of his country seemed sufficient Diplomacy was a job for a younger and more elastic man, and the duties of his position, light as they had been since his successful prosecution of the Oregon claims, became increasingly tedious. Late in the year he requested relief from his post, and when Fish's acceptance of his resignation arrived, he prepared to leave the nation in which a decade of his life had been spent.

The day of his departure in June was very nearly an unofficial day of mourning in Berlin. Baron Nothomb came to say goodbye with tears in his eyes. Bismarck and Moltke came, and at the order of the Emperor, Bülow sent a letter of farewell from the office of the Secretary of State. Gustav Richter, the artist, was commissioned by William himself to paint the American's portrait as a farewell

gift. Dozens of friends called and mementos and good wishes poured in. The Royal Academy gave him a farewell dinner and the Universities of Munich, Berlin, and Heidelberg united in a parting message, signed by nearly a hundred scholars throughout Germany. On June 30 the last report went to Hamilton Fish "The years of my great old age," he wrote, "have been made the flower of my life by my service in Berlin" He was happy to learn, before he departed, that his nephew, Bancroft Davis, who had served as Assistant Secretary of State with distinction and who had successfully prosecuted the *Alabama* claims before an international court at Geneva, was to be his successor.

He left for France the next day with Mrs. Bancroft and his manservant Herrmann, and after a short visit with his son George, who had settled into the easy life of an American in Paris, he spent a week in London visiting Carlyle and other of his British friends. He arrived in New York in mid-August, tired and old, but with the satisfaction of knowing that he had completed his second mission abroad with credit to himself and his country. He had guided the diplomatic course of the United States through the difficult years of the formation of the German empire, through the Franco-Prussian War, and through the period of peace and readjustment. He had concluded naturalization, trade, and consular treaties, had successfully argued the Oregon boundary question, and had generally brought the American and German governments to the highest degree of friendly understanding they had ever enjoyed. There was this time none of the bitter taste of his return from London in the forties. The farewell message of the hundred German scholars spoke for Germany and summarized precisely what his seven years of service had meant to Europe and America "Your name," they said, "is now the intellectual possession of every one among us."

CHAPTER NINE

The Last Leaf
1874–1891

THE TWILIGHT years of George Bancroft's life were spent in Washington, the terminus of a long journey from the Worcester farm through Boston, New York, and Europe Soon after his return from Berlin he sold his New York residence and purchased a three-story double house with a brownstone front, originally the home of a wealthy Maryland family, located at 1623 H Street in the national capital. The home was well furnished. In the wide sweep of the hall hung a huge painting of William I, Emperor of Germany, and on the first floor were the banquet room, salon, parlors, and retiring rooms Much of the second floor was given over to the study, a large square room, strewn with bushels of documents and papers, and four adjoining rooms were filled with ceiling-high bookcases. From his study windows he could look out on the long beds of hyacinths and roses on the front lawn. The entire arrangement suited the old man exactly — there were facilities for work, for pleasure, and for flowers, the three things he liked most.

There were several reasons apparent for the change of residence from New York to Washington. The milder climate of the capital suited his wife's health better than that of New York City, and in addition, Washington was a city of cultured, cosmopolitan society, not a business center Accustomed to European courts and no longer the "man of eager manners" that Emerson had once called him, but an elder statesman, a gentle and urbane scholar, mellowed by years and wisdom, the life of the capital appealed to him. There were more people whom he wished to see in Washington than in New York or Boston. If they were not already there, they came sooner or later, both Europeans and Americans. He wished to spend his old age, he said, in "a circle of friends who are de-

voted to the culture of truth. . . . If but half-a-dozen of such men would but meet weekly at dinner at my house I should find instruction and delight and beguile the infirmities of years "

In the years that followed there were a good many such dinners, of canvas-back, red snappers, or Chesapeake terrapin sent from New York, of pompano or Savannah shad, with Herrmann, the trusted servant, whispering advice to the guests about the better choice of wines, shipped from Europe by Bancroft Davis. Bancroft's home was a meeting place for the great and near-great, and a dinner invitation to the house on H street ranked very nearly with one from the White House or an embassy. There one might find Henry Cabot Lodge, Rutherford Hayes, Chief Justice Waite of the Supreme Court, John Sherman, Spofford of the Library of Congress, Senator Hoar, Senator Edmunds, Bancroft's orphaned nephew Captain Bancroft Gherardi, now on his way to an admiral's stripes, or perhaps any one of a number of distinguished American and European scholars. Henry Adams, who lived next to John Hay on Lafayette Square, called often, as did Hay or some other young scholar who might accompany them S. Weir Mitchell, the physician-novelist, was a frequent visitor; the two men once arranged a dinner at the historian's home at which every guest was a man with presidential aspirations — John Sherman, his brother the General, James G Blaine, Thomas Bayard, and others — and they amused themselves the entire evening by simply listening and observing. In the mornings Bancroft worked on the seemingly never-ending task of finishing the *History*. In the afternoons he [illegible] parks [illegible] or the [illegible] with [illegible] his family shared the Bancroft home, often accompanied him, and he became a familiar Washington landmark with his erect, military bearing, his slight, dapper figure dressed in black with a rose pinned in his lapel, and his snow-white hair and flowing beard. The story was told that a White House guard, upon being asked the identity of the old gentleman who passed the gates daily, replied that it was "an old German professor named Bancroft."

The historian's correspondence, always voluminous, was increased during his retirement by his world-wide circle of acquaintances and friends Until Austin Scott, his former secretary, returned from Michigan to take up his duties again in 1875, B-

spent some two hours daily merely answering letters, time and energy that at seventy-five he could ill afford to waste. A list of his correspondence for any single year is appallingly long. He received regular letters from his sons, from Bancroft Gherardi, from his sister Lucretia, and other surviving members of his family. Business and professional letters were many, from his publishers, from investment companies, from stockbrokers, from historical societies usually offering him honorary memberships, from speakers' bureaus, from book stores and horticultural societies. Herman Grimm, Baron Nothomb, von Behr, Gneist, Bancroft Davis, and others kept him informed of European affairs, and letters asking advice or assistance came from both sides of the Atlantic. Sherman, writing his memoirs in 1876, wanted to know about royalties and publishing contracts Writing frightened the warrior, who said he would "rather fight Shiloh over again . . . than attempt to describe it in words." Lord Houghton, preparing an article for the *Quarterly Review,* wanted a complete summary of Anglo-American relations since 1776, "tracing the different currents of sentiment between the two countries." John Bigelow asked information on Franklin's relations with Vergennes for his forthcoming *Franklin.* Benjamin Peirce of Harvard wanted a consulship for one Luigi Monti, preferably at Palermo, and Bancroft Gherardi, facing a courtmartial over the flogging of a midshipman aboard the *Pensacola,* needed his uncle's assistance in dealing with Secretary of the Navy Robison There were probably a hundred requests to be filled each month for fifteen years, and a hundred and more letters to be written

By July each year Bancroft was at "Roseclyffe," his Newport home. Newport in the seventies and eighties slept quietly on the rocky Rhode Island shore, its trade gone and its wharves rotting, an old seaport town turned resort There a group of resorters lived a wealthy life, quiet enough to be restful, bohemian enough to be interesting, ostentatious enough to be stimulating. There were besmocked artists and their easels along the Point, ladies picnicking along the shore or on the knolls, Italian opera companies, open-air poetry meetings, banquets and balls. The wealthy businessmen from the cities bought villas there, and the minor intellectuals who could afford it came — Julia Ward Howe, T. W. Higginson, Helen Hunt (better known as "H. H."), "Fanny Fern,"

James Parton the biographer, Charlotte Cushman, C C Perkins, and others.

"Roseclyffe" faced Bellevue Avenue, with August Belmont's estate to the north, G. F Parkman's on the west, and John F. Knower's on the south As its name implied, its chief attraction was its huge beds of roses, tended faithfully by Bancroft in the summer and gardener George Hardwicke in the winter months Roses became the joy of Bancroft's declining years, a passion shared by his [illegible]

gardener John Brady. At Newport he had nearly five hundred varieties, including some cuttings sent by Bismarck from his own Pomeranian gardens, and for twenty years in his rose catalogue he kept a careful account of all he grew, notes on their growth, the labor expended on each type, conditions of bloom, and other information. He liked to send great bunches of them to his friends, and many a stranger, passing by his Newport or his Washington homes and remarking on their beauty, was amazed at the sudden appearance from behind a hedge of the owner himself with a dozen roses, presented to the passerby with old-fashioned courtliness. Brady found a "sport" that suddenly appeared in a bed of seedlings, a red rose that was hardy and of good color, and, it was found, one that would bloom throughout the year Brady called it the Hagner, after one of his employer's rose-growing friends, but its nickname, "American Beauty," stuck. Working in his gardens or riding his horses, which he shipped from Washington every year, Bancroft spent many pleasant months at Newport. In October he usually left for Washington.

The labor of forty years came to an end in 1874, some months after his return from Berlin, in the tenth and last volume of the *History*. In forty years, interrupted by frequent excursions into politics and four offices in the service of his party or his country, he had written one million, seven hundred thousand words, while Richard Hildreth had written nearly as many in sixteen. He was a slow worker but a tireless one Rising at five in the summer and six in the winter, Bancroft worked in his study, copying facts from his sources into "daybooks," one book for every year to be covered in the volume and about ten pages for each day. After comparing

his evidence with that from various auxiliary sources, Bancroft had breakfast. Then he met his secretary, Austin Scott, and began dictating pages of text rapidly and enthusiastically, immediately revising them. The copy was then laid away to be revised again later — some portions of the manuscript were revised seven times before appearing in print. The old man's energy had slackened only slightly in forty years, although fourteen- and sixteen-hour stints had been reduced to seven and eight. Henry Adams, working on his own histories, was spurred to greater activity by the example of his seventy-four-year-old neighbor and the number of candles he burned before breakfast. Volume X, covering the final years of the Revolution and the peace, and carrying to its conclusion the section entitled "America's Independence is Acknowledged," was the result of many such days of work in the hours before dawn.

The tenth volume, despite the seven years which separated its date of publication from that of its immediate predecessor, showed that the author's hand had lost none of its sure touch. Two long chapters on Germany and its relations to the United States during the late years of the war reflected the author's combing of German archives during his stay in Berlin, and the evidence amassed for him by his fellow-consuls throughout the continent appeared in his careful and detailed treatment of European diplomacy as it affected the American cause, an approach to the period suggested to him by John Adams a generation earlier. His ever-present sense of the dramatic was not missing, he titled one chapter, "The King of Spain Baffled by the Backwoodsmen of Virginia," another "A People without a Government," and his account of the complot of Clinton and Arnold, with the tragic figure of André in the shadows, was a piece of narrative art.

But in 1874, even as the last volume of the *History* went to press and as Motley finished *John of Barneveld* and Parkman *The Old Regime in Canada,* they were all on the way to being outmoded, last leaves on the old historical tree. Since the Civil War a newer concept of historical writing had arisen. It was possible, said August Comte, to apply scientific methods to the study of history and thus to analyze with laboratory accuracy the meaning of the past. The evolutionary [illegible]
and through [illegible]
that a new e[illegible]
tion of *The Origin of Species,* and many agreed with him. Comte

and Darwin between them made history a unified, continuous thing, capable of being traced through the centuries of mutation in scientific fashion. History rested on the knees of science, and not of philosophy, as Bancroft and his generation had believed. Younger men, carrying on the great tradition of the patriarchs — Moses Coit Tyler, Henry Adams, Andrew White, John W. Burgess, Schouler, Von Holst, Rhodes, Fiske, Channing and their contemporaries — were products of a different school, trained in different methods They were, or they presumed themselves to be, searchers after pure fact, impersonal observers, for the most part less interested in the literary aspects of the craft than in plain fact, and the philosophy, the grand design, sweeping imagination, and flowery prose of the older "romantic" historians were often lacking in the pages of their histories There was to be no more theorizing, no proving of great historical theses, simply a cold analysis of fact Historical writing had gained much, it was true — restraint of expression, impartiality of presentation, more extensive and precise systems of documentation, greater awareness of the importance of previously unnoticed economic and social factors — but it lost something too in the process. Except for the work of Henry Adams (and Fiske had a glimmering of it) it lost art, the great prose style of the earlier nineteenth-century writers It lost humanity, the impact of the historian's personality on his material It lost the indefinable quality that Bancroft and his fellows had put into their volumes.

The reviews of Bancroft's volume reflected the changing temper of historical writing, although the public's reception of its favorite chronicler of America was as warm as it had always been. Henry Adams, the leader of the new scientific school who had once said that Prescott, Motley, Parkman, and Bancroft were "none of them men of extraordinary talent," wrote ten pages of friendly disagreement in the *North American Review* The historian's ardent and inherent Jacksonism, he thought, had been tempered but was still present. The author displayed partisanship for certain men and nations, and his tendency to digress, particularly upon matters per- [illegible] But these faults were bal-

Adams Bancroft's chief weaknesses were his "inevitable peculiarities of style" and "a restlessness of mind which is apt to mislead his readers as to the relative importance of events" — a tendency to

spend space on things he liked, not because they were important, but because he was an authority on them.

The criticisms of the *National Quarterly Review* were sharper. Accuracy, lucidity, and unity, qualities to be desired in any historical work, were conspicuous for their absence, the style obscure and turgid, the volume "an overgrown and flabby bantling." Missing the point completely, the anonymous reviewer asked, "Will Mr. Bancroft inform us what are the *intuitions* of reason, a faculty hitherto concerned with deduction?" His question was a graphic illustration of how far in the past the origins of Bancroft's historical theory lay, for to the thirties and forties, an age familiar with the Emersonian-transcendental concept of the Reason, Bancroft's phrase would have been perfectly clear. To the new school of scientific historians, brought up on Darwin and Comte and German seminars, it had lost its meaning, and so had Bancroft's religio-philosophical approach to history itself.

In 1876 Ralph Waldo Emerson, his mind clouding with age, made the last entry in his journal. In the same year George Bancroft, three years his senior, was in the midst of a revision of his ten volumes of history There was another to come, two volumes of constitutional history, a full-length biography, and a dozen shorter pieces, before he laid down his pen. It had been four decades since the first volume had appeared and the approach of the centennial year of America's Declaration of Independence provided an opportunity for a complete recasting of the entire work in the light of later criticisms and discoveries, a task upon which the historian was engaged almost immediately after the appearance of the last volume. The first volume of the revised Centenary edition appeared in December of 1875, bound in brown, a shield and an eagle stamped on its cover, but with the imperialistic motto of the earlier series missing. The title of the work he changed slightly to read *The History of the United States of America, From the Discovery of the Continent*, and for the first time he included an index of names and topics at the end of each volume. "The notes of forty years," Bancroft wrote in the introduction,

> form the groundwork of the present revision, to which a solid year of close and undivided application has been devoted. . . . The main object has been the attainment of exact accuracy; so that, if possible, not even a partial error may escape correction.

That simplicity and clarity also had been among the criteria of the revision was evident from the content of the volumes The ten were reduced to six by means of a ruthless pruning of the style. Much of the inflated prose disappeared along with the frequent hymns to liberty and exhortations of providence The "grandson's war" of ten years before led to a tempering of the author's attitude toward several of the personalities of the Revolution, and the nationalism displayed in the previous volumes was now less aggressive But in general the guiding principles of the *History* remained unchanged; the progress of the colonies toward independence was still God-ordained, and the hand of destiny evident in every event of the long march toward revolution The excision of non-essential material gave, on the whole, a better balance to the work, making clearer Bancroft's conception of the relative importance of the colonial and revolutionary periods in the study of the formation of the republic. The first volume covered one hundred and sixty-eight years, the second seventy-eight, the third eighteen. The fourth, treating of events immediately preceding the Revolution, covered nine years. The fifth dealt with but the first two years of the war, and the last with the remaining five and the peace. About half of the work thus concerned itself with the narrative of events from 1766 to 1782, a distribution indicative of Bancroft's belief that the colonial period was simply a prelude to the Revolution, and one which, it was noticeable, gave greatest space to the climactic center of the whole action The revised edition sold well; in 1876 the sales totaled about 18,000 (the old edition still sold seven thousand volumes that year), and as late as 1880 they ran close to 10,000 a year. Little, Brown sent the author a check for $2,500 shortly after the appearance of the first volume, $5,500 a few months after, and $3,500 later in the year, lending credence to Henry Adams' ironic remark that "the historico-literary line does pay."

The Centenary revision, which might well have marked the close of a life's work, was not by any means Bancroft's last word, for since 1834 it had been his aim to write the complete narrative of America Volume X, drawing the curtain on the Revolutionary War, ended on an unfinished note with a promise of more to follow. The last act, the federalization of the colonies into a unified nation, remained to be written Almost before the last of the Centenary volumes appeared Bancroft was deep in a study of the con-

stitutional period. As he had been when he first began his worl in 1834 he was working in a relatively uncharted field His only predecessor had been George Ticknor Curtis, whose *History of the Origin, Formation, and Adoption of the Constitution,* published in 1855–1858, he carefully read, annotated, and outlined in sheaves of notes. Curtis's book, while a competent study of the period 1782–1787, was hardly definitive, and Bancroft, with his usual thoroughness, set out to examine every existing source of information.

The trail was a long one, leading eventually through the archives of more than half the original thirteen colonies and into unpublished manuscript collections of inestimable historical value. The Library of Congress, which had recently acquired the collections of Peter Force, gave him permission to use them, and with the aid of several secretaries Bancroft scanned and copied hundreds of documents. From the surviving families of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention he secured permission to copy their highly important letters and records, evidence augmented by the personal collections he had been gathering at home and abroad for forty years For the most part, the material which he used was relatively new — the Langdon-Elwyn letters, the John Sullivan papers, the Samuel Adams papers, the Roger Sherman papers, the manuscripts of Chief Justice Ellsworth, the papers of Robert R. Livingston, John Jay, Gouverneur Morris, George Clinton, William Paterson, George Mason, and Samuel Chase. He found the hitherto undiscovered proceedings of the Hartford convention. He had, by courtesy of Guizot, complete reports for 1782 to 1790 of French diplomats to the United States, and he had too, by courtesy of the American consular service, copies of pertinent documents in Dutch, Spanish, and Austrian archives. His agents in London, through Lord Granville's permission, were allowed to copy British diplomatic correspondence for the years following 1782, the first time these reports had ever been made available to an American, and William Evarts threw open to Bancroft's secretaries the records of the United States State Department. Added to all this was the fact that Bancroft was probably the only living historian who could draw upon first-hand information received from a signer of the Constitution, for he had his own notes, made during a conversation in 1836 with James Madison, a few weeks before the ex-President's death. With pardonable pride Bancroft could say in his preface:

"Thus I have been able to trace step by step the march of the people of the United States toward a union"

Henry Adams' remark that to him "old George Bancroft was never more than forty" was almost literally true if the historian's habits of work were the point in question, for he attacked his new task with his customary display of energy He arose, as usual, at dawn, and until his assistants arrived ("reference secretary" Scott and "writing secretary" Weston) he filled a day-book with the dates and facts of all occurrences that happened over the globe on each day of the period under consideration, material that was the result of his own research or that of Scott In another notebook, called a topic-book, he gave a page to a single topic — "Washington," "Army," "Foreign Affairs," "Congress," "Finance," and so on — placing under each heading all the facts he could bring to bear upon that subject, a task involving months of labor but an excellent method of organizing information upon a hundred different things If he wished, for example, to write five pages on national finance in the summer of 1784, the proper page gave him all the facts in chronological order, cross-indexed and supported by reference to the original sources

After a light breakfast at seven the actual work of composition began as the historian dictated a first draft to his copyist, inspected and revised the dictation of the day before, and spent some time preparing his second drafts for the printer. At noon came a light lunch, followed by an hour's sleep, and during the afternoon, with eight hours' labor behind him, Bancroft walked with Herrmann or Alexander Bliss or rode one of his horses through the Washington parks. The evening was free for visits with friends or hours at home with his wife For six years the routine varied but little from the pattern, and in 1882 *The History of the Formation of the Federal Constitution* appeared, two volumes bound in brown cloth, the familiar trademark of eagle, shield, and motto once more on the cover.

The constitutional period lent itself perfectly to Bancroft's method of writing history. American history during the years 1782 to 1788 he visualized as a unit, a drama, he explained in the preface, of five acts — "The Confederation, On the Way to a Federal Convention, The Federal Convention, The People of the United States in Judgment on the Constitution, The Federal Government" — and he treated his narrative in the dramatic fashion he fe

warranted. Had the volumes been published anonymously few could have failed to identify their author, for in approach, method, and theme they carried on the tradition of historical writing that was unmistakably Bancroftian The stage was filled with heroes, those men who "felt the ennobling love of their fellow-men, and knew themselves to be the forerunners of reform for the civilized world" and who met to form the thirteen republics into a federal commonwealth while the dark antagonist, the specter of disintegration and dissolution, lurked in the background. The central theme of the account was the forcing into a more coercive union of the states through the threat of British and Spanish economic competition, internal economic and social clashes, the need for a united front in foreign affairs, and, above all, for the fulfillment of a divine plan for the creation, through the agency of the American national genius, of the first perfect republic. The nation did not "float darkling down the stream of the ages," for "a superior power of intelligence and love" shaped its course.

Bancroft's constitutional history had its merits and its defects His documentation was more complete than in his previous volumes, though careful check of his sources showed that he still saw nothing sacred in quotation marks, being quite willing to shift or to combine sentences and passages to suit his wishes. His style had gained terseness and swiftness. There were fewer purple passages and no digressions, only at the opening and at the close of his narrative did he allow himself flourishes of rhetoric, and those restrained ones. But it was philosophical and not scientific history. The hand of providence appeared on every page. The old sweeping generalizations were there, exemplified at the beginning of his book in the statement that "from the ocean to the American outposts nearest the Mississippi one desire prevailed for a closer connection, one belief that the only opportunity for its creation was come." The Confederation was in his opinion the villain of the piece; it had been instituted and it had failed simply because men, their minds clouded by war, had missed the plain road of wisdom and experience. He had little conception of the theories underlying the Confederation, nor of the opposition to the Constitution and the reasons for it — opponents of the document, as in the case of Patrick Henry, either had "a greater attachment to the states" or were "plainly misguided." He made the whole story simple and lucid. The Articles of Confederation proved unsatisfactory, the

people recognized the fact, and with the express demand of the people for a new and better instrument of government in mind their representatives met to fulfill the nation's wholehearted desire with the help of divine guidance. The tangled skein of economic and social rivalries and the threads of self-interest all disappeared in Bancroft's account. The story resolved into the creation of a "supreme law," the result of "a persistent and healthy progress," which "shut and bolted and barred the gates of internal revolution"

Yet the history was in many ways the finest thing that Bancroft had ever done, the most unified, thoughtful, and least partisan of his works. He had disclosed rich mines of new material, the most important examples of which he reprinted in an appendix covering nearly a third of the books It was the first authoritative historical treatment of the period, a piece of writing unsurpassed in fundamental research for twenty years, and one which, except for its emphasis of political over economic and social factors, carried weight for many more He saw more clearly than most historians of his time the economic and diplomatic problems faced by the nation during the post-war period of the Confederation, and for the first time he traced the political traditions embodied in the Constitution to their roots in British, French, Puritan, classic, and colonial political thought Most of all, the volumes gave flesh and blood to the dry, faded documents in the dusty archives of two continents. The two brown-covered volumes spoke from the past, it was true, but they did not deserve Henry Adams' remark that although he could not read them, he found the appendices entertaining.

Glancing backward at the conclusion of his labors, Bancroft realized that the span of years that had elapsed since its beginning had carried him far beyond his time. "Scarcely one who wished me good speed when I first essayed to trace the history of America," he wrote in the preface to his volumes on the Constitution, "remains to greet me as I near the goal" Of the great men of New England's renaissance only he, Parkman, Lowell, and Holmes remained. Emerson's name was erased from the roll in the year Bancroft wrote the preface, Motley, Prescott, Thoreau, Sparks, Norton, and Kirkland had all been dead for years, and although new and younger friends appeared, they could not replace the old ones. "Being more than four-score years old," he wrote in 1882, "I know that

the time for my release will soon come. Conscious of being near the shore of eternity, I await without impatience and without dread the beckoning of the hand that will summon me to rest." Thoughts of death became increasingly frequent. "I have left mortal affairs behind," he told a newspaper reporter. "All my thoughts are on eternity."

His statement was not quite exact, however, for his remaining years were full and active, his health excellent, and his enthusiasm for life undiminished He took his daily ride at three in the afternoon along the Potomac, remaining at home only in the event of a heavy storm or a temperature of below forty degrees. When the harness-traces broke while he was driving a pair of horses at Newport, he held them in control until they ran into the traffic of the main road, hurling him from his carriage and breaking his shoulder-blade and rib He was well enough to return to Washington in twenty days, and the broken bones seemed to knit perfectly. He rode on horseback from his home to the Great Falls of the Potomac and return, a thirty-mile round trip, without noticeable fatigue. He jotted in his diary, "Find time for exercise or will have to find time for illness," and he amazed his younger friends by the vigor of his constitution. His working hours, while tempered from the fourteen- and sixteen-hour stretches of his youth, remained exhaustingly long and precisely regular, and once, his wife attested, he worked from five in the morning to eight in the evening with one hour off for a meal at nine. He kept a meticulous record of his book purchases, of his profits from stocks and bonds, of the growth of his roses, of payments of bills, of orders for food, and even of the accuracy of his watch — he knew, by consulting his files, that over an eight-month period it lost exactly one-half minute every month. He was always busy, and his tremendous memory was unimpaired. When Austin Scott questioned a statement in an earlier volume of the *History*, he took Scott to the Library of Congress, called for half-a-dozen books he had not looked at in thirty years, and told him what pages to examine for references.

Bancroft's copious correspondence during the eighties eventually required the services of another secretary He kept a letter file with the name of the sender filed alphabetically and the subject matter of the letter cross-referenced (under S, for example, came "Sympathy," with a file of all letters received expressing concern over his accident with the runaway horses) and he answered them

all, keeping copies of the letters he deemed especially important. Much of it was routine. There were letters from authors, asking for comment or criticism, notes of recommendation to publishers, or information about a historical event There were invitations to centennials, memorials, dedications, dinners, invitations to name a hotel in Chattanooga, to choose the ten Bible verses he liked best, to write a brief sketch of his favorite book for inclusion in an encyclopaedia for young people, to name a new rose, to send a lock of his beard for a raffle, to write an introductory sketch for a gift-book, to speak on the evils of drink before a temperance meeting, to write his name on a ribbon in order that a young lady might embroider it and sell it at a church dinner There were dozens of letters from horticulturists, letters and reports from his publishers, letters from cranks. An impassioned Parisian wrote asking him to "take back, in the name of truth, in the name of fairness, in the name of Americanism, in the name of your memory all that you have said about Bismarck being the great rejuvenator of Europe!" — the Berlin telegram come back to haunt him. Of course, scores of requests for autographs and photographs came. All received a courteous answer, except those across which the historian scrawled "Begging," and filed under B.

Bancroft could have afforded, however, an answer even to the plain-spoken and often crudely phrased requests for money, for he was a comparatively wealthy man Shrewd management of his finances through the years, added to the renewed revenues from his historical work, increased his personal fortunes to nearly four hundred thousand dollars. He was able to set aside fifty-seven thousand dollars in gilt-edged railroad stocks alone for the support of his expatriate son George, living in Paris, and when his French granddaughter Sarah married, he contracted to pay her husband five thousand francs a year in fulfillment of the marriage contract, after the continental custom, that her father could not. To the city of Worcester in Massachusetts he gave ten thousand dollars in 1882 for the establishment of the Aaron and Lucretia Bancroft scholarship, to provide college expenses for poor but brilliant students, and he contributed a thousand to the Captain Samuel Ward Library Fund of Lancaster, Massachusetts, in memory of Ward's

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Wash-

ington. His age, his patriarchal white-bearded dignity, his great learning, and his distinguished record, combined to give him the position in the capital of an elder statesman. Many of the Congressmen were slightly awed by him; after all, he had talked with John Adams, James Madison, and Lafayette; he had known Jackson, and Polk, and every President since Monroe, as well as dozens of great men in France, England, and Germany. A seat at his dinner table was highly prized. The saying in Washington was that the President was allowed to accept the social invitations of Cabinet members, Supreme Court justices, and George Bancroft. In 1879 the Senate voted him full privileges of the Senate floor, the only private citizen so admitted by virtue of his name and not his office. He rarely took advantage of his privilege, but his occasional visits to the capitol called for newspaper reporters and suspension of Senate business until his departure With his snow-white hair and beard, sharp eyes behind gold-rimmed spectacles, his small, erect figure dressed in a black suit and an overcoat with a royal sable collar, he made an impressive entrance, usually accompanied by his friend Spofford First speaking to the Democratic leaders (the old Jacksonism never died), he would cross the floor to the Republican side, and leave after a few minutes with the breath of the past clinging to him — Justin Morrill of Vermont, the oldest member of either branch of Congress, was a child when Bancroft graduated from Harvard.

But there was little to interest him in the Senate now. The contentious muse of politics for whose wooing Prescott had censured him no longer called to him as stridently as before. The battles of his day, by that time, had all been either lost or won, yet John Sherman reported that it was wisest to eschew politics in conversation with him, especially politics before 1870, for, said Sherman with unconscious irony, "I think he had always regarded himself as a Democrat." Now and then, however, something struck fire. The proposal of a third term for Grant aroused his vigorous protest. "It would in my judgment be a long stride toward changing our republic into a monarchy," he told John Bigelow, and he was pleased when the third term talk subsided. He was perfectly willing to offer his advice to the younger statesmen when he felt it necessary, advice which usually went unheeded. The "legal tender" ruling of the Supreme Court in 1884 in the case of Juillard versus Greenman, that the power to issue paper money was not

withheld from Congress by the Constitution, stirred the ashes of the old hard-money fire in the old man's heart and resulted in his final piece of political writing, *A Plea for the Constitution of the United States, Wounded in the House of Its Guardians*, published in pamphlet form in 1886.

The Supreme Court, contended Bancroft, was totally wrong In his own studies he had gone into the paper money question deeply, including a chapter discussing that very matter at length in the second volume of his constitutional history, and he was convinced that the Court's ruling was directly opposed to the spirit of the document and the wishes of its signers The Constitution, said the pamphlet, was higher than the Supreme Court, and it could not be changed or interpreted in any changing way except by the people whose delegates drew it up. If the Constitution did not specifically confer the power of emitting paper money upon Congress, it rested with the states. His plea was the ghost of the old states'-rights school; the trend of constitutional thinking was the opposite, and his protest attracted little serious attention. Bancroft never became reconciled to the new school of thought He had always been a hard-money man. His career in politics had opened fifty-two years before in the pages of the *North American Review* with an attack upon what he believed was a misinterpretation of the financial powers of Congress, and it closed on the same theme.

In spite of his advanced age, Bancroft's pen was never at rest. Magazine editors were glad to receive his manuscripts, whatever their topics, and when the spirit moved him he contributed an occasional article to the journals In 1885 he sent a brief character sketch of Washington, expressing essentially the same judgment he had already made in his *History*, to Bonner's New York *Ledger*, and, as a token of friendship, a review of Holmes' *Emerson* and a note on Lowell to the *North American Review*. He contracted to do two reminiscences of Henry Clay and John Adams for the *Century*, the first of which appeared in 1885 and the other two years after. With his Worcester schoolmate Stephen Salisbury he wrote a note on the relations between Hamilton and Washington for the American Antiquarian Association in 1883, a highly unflattering interpretation of Hamilton's character

Although he rarely accepted any of the numerous invitations to appear on the platform, he was gratified by his selection in 1886 to speak before the American Historical Association at its annual

meeting. The appearance of the aged historian, whose work had begun a quarter-century before some of the members had been born, served as a graphic illustration of the gulf between the old history and the new. His address, titled *Self-Government,* carried on the tradition of his essays of the forties and fifties History, he said, was a science, for its aim was "to discern the presence of law in the actions of human beings," and as illustration he briefly traced the history of the rise of self-government in America, showing how the historian discovered the roots of the present through the scientific study of the past. There was nothing in the address that he had not said before, but the difficulty was that the speaker and his audience attached totally different meanings to the word science as applied to history. To the historians of the younger generation it meant an objective search for facts upon which a generalization might be founded To Bancroft it meant an analysis of the past in an attempt to discover in it great moral truths, the proofs of what one already intuitively believed. It had meant that to him for half a century, and he was too old to alter his definition.

His period of retirement from the field was shortlived. The Centenary edition did not fully satisfy him as the definitive form in which he wished his work to survive him; it did not include the two volumes of constitutional history and certain portions of it, in his opinion, needed further revision. "I want my history to be correct in every statement and every particular," he told a New York reporter, and within a year of the constitutional history the first volume of what he called "The Author's Last Revision" appeared. That it was his last revision he was certain, but that it was not his last historical work he was equally sure. There was no reason, he told J C Derby, why he could not bring the narrative down to the eighteen-thirties, thereby completing his original design of a history of the United States, expressed in 1834, "to the present time." He worked more slowly now, but the history of the Republic from 1782 to 1840 was familiar ground and he felt that he could accomplish his task in less time than before.

The Last Revision, the final volume of which came from Appleton's press in 1886, saw further changes wrought in the body of his work. Drastic pruning of the already once-tempered prose of the 1876 edition and of the two later volumes cut the total number of volumes from eight to six. With his wife's help he "slaughtered adjectives," as he called it, with the result that his style gained

a restraint, swiftness, and maturity that it had never known before. The passage from the first edition of 1834 appeared stripped of excess verbiage, direct and compact

> It is as guides and pioneers that the fathers of the old colony merit gratitude Through scenes of gloom and misery, they showed the way to an asylum for those who would go to the wilderness for liberty of conscience. Accustomed "in their native land to a plain country life

> tion, the fame which their successors would award to them "Out of small beginnings," said Bradford, "great things have been produced; and, as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light kindled hath shone to many, yea, in some sort, to our whole nation" "Let it not be grievous to you" — such was the consolation offered from England to the Pilgrims in the season of the greatest suffering — "let it not be grievous to you that you have been instruments to break the ice for others. The honor shall be yours to the world's end. Yea, the memory of the adventures to this plantation shall never die

The revision saw some significant changes in approach as well as in style. He tempered the nationalism of his earlier volumes, and he removed completely the accusation first made in 1834 and retained in 1876 that British mercantile interests were deliberately responsible for the introduction of slavery in the colonies, since the issue of slavery was a dead one and the point of his antislavery passages now lost. There were appreciably fewer references to the intervention of divine Providence in American affairs, a concession to the changed temper of a less God-conscious public in the later part of the century. The constitutional history was altered but slightly in the process of revision, but in its entirety the result was a definite improvement It was still old-fashioned history by the new standards, but it was historical writing refined and deepened until it became representative of the best that the romantic literary historians of the early century had contributed to the art of history.

The completion of the Last Revision brought the realization to George Bancroft that he was a tired old man. It had taken him nearly three years merely to revise — his daily quota had been three hundred words or less — while at the age of fifty-two he had

published two new volumes within a single year. At seventy-six he wrote in his diary that now and then he awoke at dawn simply from an excess of energy and health, but there were now no more such entries Shortly after the publication of the Last Revision Elizabeth, his wife, died, and with his stepson William Bliss, his own grandson Wilder (John Chandler's son), and the faithful Herrmann, he took her to her grave in the quiet of Worcester's Rural Cemetery. She was eighty-seven years old, and they had been married forty-eight years. His eighty-year-old sister Lucretia, then travelling in Europe, started home to keep house for him but died on shipboard. The double loss brought death very close to him, and he wrote sadly in his diary, "I find I am growing very old, and must begin to take farewell of the world" The house on H Street seemed empty without the presence of his wife, and the old man was lonely

The house did not remain empty long, for his half-French granddaughter Suzanne, the child of his widowed son George, swept into it like a fresh breeze. Beautiful, talented, and with a mind as keen as her grandfather's, she must have seemed to him a living memory of his own Louisa, dead years past, and he often referred to her affectionately as "my own daughter." Her presence did much to revive his failing spirits, for the house was full of young people and laughter, but her stay with her grandfather was short. She was the most sought-after belle of Washington society in 1887 and in the winter married Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the scion of the great old Maryland family, leaving Herrmann and the old man again alone. Two months after her marriage Bancroft wrote his son John Chandler, in Boston, "I have come to the conclusion that the best arrangement for the rest of my life is, that you and your family should find in my house your home for the remainder of my life." He made over his will, a change necessitated by his wife's death, leaving the bulk of his estate to his son John, fifteen hundred a year to George junior, fifty thousand dollars to his granddaughter Suzanne, one thousand a year to his granddaughter Sarah, two thousand to his servant Herrmann, and a hundred dollars each to all the other servants.

Bancroft's last years were happy ones His son's family gave him the best of care and company. His stepson Alexander Bliss, who lived in Washington's West End, and his nephew Bancroft Davis, ex-minister, ex-judge, and at that time reporter of the Supreme

Court, were frequent visitors. Callers of one sort or another came to see him nearly every evening, and invitations to dinner were as numerous as ever. Henry and Brooks Adams often stopped for chats; the historian Paul Leicester Ford came to inquire the whereabouts of the papers of John Dickinson; James Schouler, writing his own history of the United States, called to talk with him about Polk and his administration Frederic Hedge, the problem child of Schulpforta and now an old man himself, came to see him, and so did James Russell Lowell, Charles Godfrey Leland, S. Weir Mitchell, Phillips Brooks, and many others Grover Cleveland had him as his guest at White House receptions; Senator Hoar took him to the Senate to witness the inauguration of Benjamin Harrison, and at the centennial celebration of Washington's inauguration in 1889 the historian sat with the Cabinet and the Supreme Court on the reviewing stand On October 3, his birthday, there was always a steady stream of visitors to his home and the mails were heavy with greetings from hundreds of people, many of whom he had never seen but who had been brought up on his histories, people in Brooklyn, Minneapolis, St Louis, San Francisco, Seattle, in France, Germany, and England Robert Browning wired a typically Browningesque congratulatory poem for his eighty-seventh birthday (phrased in a short meter to save charges):

> Bancroft, the message-bearing wire
> Which flashes my "All Hail" today
> Moves slowlier than the heart's desire
> That, what hand pens, tongue's self might say

But it was manifestly impossible for George Bancroft, whatever his age, to stop work. There was too much still to be done, too many ideas flooding his mind He wanted to write a biography of Shakespeare, he told Edward Everett Hale, "from what we really know of him," and he begged Hale to hold him to it so that he might get it done. He reread all the plays, taking copious notes, and dictated a three-page introductory essay for the proposed biography before his interest and energy lagged. In 1887 he began gathering materials for a life of James Knox Polk, writing to his old editor J. G. Harris in Tennessee to enlist his help in obtaining the President's papers from his widow and in finding a file of the defunct *Bay State Democrat*, valuable for its campaign material.

He also was thinking of doing a life of Jackson, he told Harris, a plan he had once toyed with years ago. There had been a vague arrangement made by Old Hickory, to which Harris attested, that the Jackson papers were to go to Bancroft, but they had fallen into the hands of the Blair family. The Blairs refused to part with them and Bancroft gave the idea up after making out some forty pages of notes. He did, however, travel to Tennessee, where he copied many of Polk's papers, beginning the task of composition in 1888. The biography was never finished, although he put his evidence to good use by rewriting the entry on Polk in Appleton's *Cyclopaedia of American Biography.*

Of all the projects laid down for himself in his last years Bancroft completed only one. In 1844 he had begun a campaign biography of Martin Van Buren, only to have its object nullified by Polk's victory in the nominating convention. He still had his half-completed manuscript, and in 1889, working from notes more than forty years old, he wrote and published *Martin Van Buren to the End of His Public Career.* It was an indiscriminately laudatory book, built about the theme of Van Buren's selflessness, his far-sightedness, his political genius, his deep devotion to the welfare of the common people, a book wholly unrepresentative of Bancroft's real genius. The reviewers were charitable and sympathetic, but the *Nation* struck its weakness exactly when it said that it sounded precisely like what it was, an outdated campaign biography. It would have been better left unwritten, for the "Author's Last Revision" was Bancroft's real monument.

With the Van Buren biography the historian's life came full circle. When he had placed the last period at its end his pen was quiet for the first time in nearly three-quarters of a century. Henry Adams, paying what he referred to as "one of his duty calls," noticed as early as 1887 that Bancroft occasionally confused faces and forgot identities, and in each following year the shadows in his mind darkened. He kept at work, but his notes grew scattered and pathetically illegible, notes on a hundred subjects, scribbled hastily on torn scraps of paper, memorandum pads, and odd pages — jottings on Cornwallis, on legislation for the laboring classes, on legal tender, Napoleon, Talleyrand, clippings and quotations, an outward reflection of the growing disorder within. He would suddenly remember a conversation of decades before, and promptly have his secretary take it down, simply to preserve it. When visitors came

(they came less frequently now) they found the old man in his study, browsing deep in the memories of the past, and it sometimes took a powerful stimulus to arouse him. When Robert Winthrop came from Boston to pay his respects the name struck a chord in Bancroft's memory. "Francis," he said, "I never thought to see you again in this life," but Francis Winthrop, Harvard '17, had been dead for seventy-two years Now and then some word would strike a spark from the dying embers, and, in a sudden burst of energy, he was his brilliant self again, the events of seventy years past as fresh and true as yesterday's, then in a little while the cloud might come, and the mists settle in his mind But the mists could not blot out the vision of the free world that glittered before him through his long life The man who dreamed it was dying, as the past that had born him was dying; he knew it, but his hope was alive. "In my long journey," he wrote the year before his death,

> many have passed away before I have reached the goal Kirkland the friend of my youth passed away, the men on whose judgments I relied, of whose candor I was [illegible]
> Sparks – are gone. I hac [illegible]
> if Hallam did not censt [illegible]
> earth Friends too are gone, but what is that? Of what moments are the feelings, the hopes, and sorrows of an individual? 'Tis not in that which related personally to one man which is important, but whilst I have been engaged with these studies how the world has changed! Our own country looks out upon the west as well as upon the east, and becomes the leader of civilization of continents and of the ages – the youngest nation of all doing the most perfect justice to all that has gone before Norway to a restoration of her nationality, Italy rising up and becoming one, a Kingdom founded upon the universal education of its children, accepted as the representative of Germany. Serfdom and slavery abolished everywhere . . . In the immense development of mental activity and intelligence, the individual becomes of less importance.

The end, when it came, came quickly. He caught cold when he returned from Newport in 1890 after a last look at his beloved roses, and although the sickness remained he insisted on taking his daily walk. On the 15th of January, 1891, his physician, Dr. Wales, ordered him to bed, and the next day the old man was unconscious. On the 17th of January he died, his son John at his bedside.

Two days later, at St. John's Cathedral in Washington, the memorial services were held. The honorary pall-bearers were Chief Justice Fuller, Justices Field and Blatchford, Senators Evarts and Bayard, Admiral Rodgers, George W. Curtis and John King of New York, Samuel Langley, and Ainsworth Spofford, and in the audience were President Harrison, Vice-President Morton, the German minister Count D'Arco Valley, James G. Blaine, General Schofield, Senator Hoar, and Civil Service Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt By order of President Harrison the flags of all the executive departments in Washington were lowered to halfmast, and so they were in all cities through which his body passed on the way to the burial ground beside his wife among the green hills and sparkling ponds of his native Massachusetts The trim, white-bearded, active little man with a pattern of freedom for the world in his brain had become a part of the history he wrote.

Historian of America, he made it the high purpose of a life which nearly spanned the century to show her part in the advancement of man, and from the rare resources of his genius, his learning, and his labor, to ennoble the story of her birth.

— The inscription on the Worcester monument.

Epilogue

The era of American life which produced George Bancroft has lately been regarded as our golden age, one which has left an indelible impression upon our intellectual traditions Realizing this, the twentieth century has worked over the mass of materials left by the nineteenth, and has reclaimed the heritage of the thinkers of the American renaissance Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Whittier, Parker, Brownson, Parkman, and many others have found their biographers, some tardily; but as a result we are in a fair way toward a better understanding of the intellectual temper of the first half of the nineteenth century than that which we have of any other portion of our past. George Bancroft deserves, certainly, to be classed with this group of people whose thinking influenced our minds and affected our times It is true that he lacked the pungency of Thoreau and the depth of Emerson, the consummate art of Hawthorne, the sharpness of Margaret Fuller, the color of Alcott, the crusading zeal of Parker, Brownson, or Whittier, but he was perhaps more representative of the nineteenth-century renaissance than any of them. His life impinged in some way on nearly every point of the perimeter of his times. Transcendentalism, literary romanticism, politics, nationalism, reform, all the streams of the century's thought —his keenly alive mind touched upon them all. Neither can the charge that he was merely a jack-of-all-trades be brought against [illegible] accorded him a place as

the age in which he lived

In another fashion George Bancroft's life takes on added importance for an age that has, to all appearances, practically forgotten him. Posterity had judged his historical work, perhaps correctly, for history seems destined to be rewritten for each generation in turn, and no historian can expect to leave behind a permanent

monument. He built the history of America about a central theme, the sovereignty of the people and their right to exercise it freely. Bancroft was a passionate believer in the cause of freedom and human rights, and if the thesis he constantly kept in view before him as he wrote history destroyed its validity as objective scholarship, it reinforced those inherent, deeply-held beliefs of the American people first expressed by the documents of the Revolution. To him America was the hope of the world. From it was to come the seed of freedom, blown across the oceans by the winds of revolution Someday the snapping of chains would be heard throughout the world, as he heard them faintly in his dying years. Men before him had seen the vision, but Bancroft expressed it first and best, speaking in the voice of America.

From the records left behind him the man emerges as a fascinating, many-sided, paradoxical personality. He was shrewd and realistic, yet a visionary and a dreamer. He was a born aristocrat, socially and intellectually, yet a firm believer in the masses and their champion in politics Many of his contemporaries suspected him of trimming his sails to meet the prevailing winds of fortune, but the man's honesty and personal integrity stand beyond question. He was often arrogant and temperamental, jealous of his reputation, sensitive to criticism and reproach, yet few men had a wider circle of friends, for there was something about him that drew understanding and tolerance. He fought with Jared Sparks, with Kirkland, with Andrews Norton, with Edward Everett, with Cogswell, Quincy, Van Buren, Hallett, Henshaw, and many of his friends, but within a few years they were his friends again Essentially he was a bookish soul, a man of the library; still, few literary men have moved more in the world of action and reality. He was a great scholar; but he was always learning, his work never finished, his volumes never quite in their final revision. He represented the culmination of the Brahmin tradition of New England, the tradition of Concord, Cambridge, and Boston at its highest, yet he was a rebel against it and could not make his peace with it.

It is in his career as a politician and diplomat that the paradoxical nature of the man is most evident, for in a final analysis of his political thought one encounters some apparently irresoluble conflicts and contradictions His distaste for "screaming with the mob" does not fit with his Jacksonian-Democratic affiliation, for if anything Old Hickory was a man of the mob. Despite his

worship of Jackson, Bancroft never actually expressed himself in agreement with Jackson's political tenets on any other doctrines except unionism and the Bank He was, in practice, never in sympathy with the Jacksonian idea of equality; he was not identified with Western agrarianism; he believed that the people could and would choose wise representatives to govern them, rather than take upon themselves all governmental duties. He visualized the government in all its branches as a balanced, interlocking, harmonious union of reciprocal powers, rather than as the tool of the strong executive, and most of all, his deification of the Constitution was out of harmony with Jackson's view that every official had the right to interpret that document for himself In effect, he was a Jeffersonian democrat, a follower of the Jeffersonian principles he praised in his youthful oration of 1826 It was the natural aristocracy of the Virginian with which he agreed. the "upward levelling" that characterized his idea of equality, and it was Jefferson's faith in the inherent possibility of the wisdom of the many rather than Jackson's faith in the actual wisdom of the ordinary man that he shared. That Bancroft chose to join the ranks of the democrats under the banner of Jackson does not necessarily justify the charges of opportunism levelled at him by his enemies. To what other party could a Jeffersonian belong in 1830, if he chose to enter active politics at all? Fundamentally he was a Jeffersonian theorist, attached to and operating within the framework of Jackson's party, not wholly agreeing with, and not wholly condemning, his natural or his adopted body of political doctrine

The sources of his political theory are obscure, yet not beyond conjecture. The effect on his youthful mind of the liberal European thought which led ultimately to the revolutions of 1848 is not to be lightly discounted As a student in Germany during his formative years, and as one of the best-informed of Americans concerning German history and philosophy, his democratic liberalism and his ardent nationalism emanated at least partly from European origins. The clearest expression of this probable indebtedness is that made by Bancroft himself in his chapter in Volume VI of the Centenary Edition of the *History* concerning the relationship between German liberalism and the rise of freedom in the United States, in which the political ideas of Kant, Lessing, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, and others — the very men he introduced to the American public in 1824 — are reviewed as European dissemina-

tors of the democratic spirit materializing in America. Then too, by the authority of his religious principles, embracing as they did a faith in mankind and its progress through divinely inspired truth, justice, and benevolence, he was predisposed toward an abstract and theoretical democracy. Like Emerson and Thoreau, he was inevitably led by a transcendental, romantic philosophy to a liberal political theory. But running beneath his theory lay a substratum of innate conservatism that colored his practice He was a Massachusetts intellectual, by birth and inclination a New England Brahmin. It was an impossibility for Bancroft the theoretical democrat to become Bancroft the practical democrat, for the Brahmin caste had iron in its laws.

There appears in Bancroft's career evidence of his ability to adapt abstract theory to the necessities of reality. From a reading of his histories, and especially of his essays and orations, one gains the impression that government was to him simply a matter of throwing before the people the problems of state and abiding by their decisions. He knew that there was much more to government than that, that the machinery of politics was intensely real and complex. Compromises with visions had to be recognized; concessions to human frailty had to be made. "It is always necessary to keep freshly in memory theoretic truth in its utmost purity and to conform institutions to it as nearly as possible, but nothing is perfect which is the work of man. . . . These are the considerations that led me to the views that have governed my life in questions of practical politics," he wrote at the close of his political career. "I hold it necessary to keep bright in our recollections the eternal principles of justice, but . . I hold that the wise statesman does not attempt impossibilities but decides every question as it presents itself on the side of freedom and in this manner assists to bring the actual state nearer and nearer the best possible state."

Thus Bancroft became a visionary political theorist on the one hand, and on the other the machine politician who handed out patronage and plotted for votes. The political concepts of Emerson were equally grand and more inspiring, but Emerson did not step down into the sordid scrabble of campaigns, nor shout above the din of a brass band at a political rally. Thoreau sat majestically in a prison cell, conducting a personal secession from a government with which he did not agree, but he refused to make concessions to the world and never grappled with the harsh realities of a Bos-

ton election. Longfellow never walked in a torchlight procession, and Hawthorne could not stomach the sordidnness of patronage. Whittier and Theodore Parker and Brownson knew something of politics, but it is safe to say that for an actual knowledge of the fashion in which the wheels of government revolved one would turn to the historian who doubled in politics rather than to his softer-minded Brahmin contemporaries. Bancroft was a man of action, and if his theory outran his action, it is to be remembered that he was not the only man who found the same problem of adjusting political theory to practice when meeting reality.

It was as the historian of America, of course, that Bancroft wished to be judged Modern examination of his work discloses its weaknesses, of which there are admittedly many Later historians have changed the emphasis he placed upon certain factors in history, obtaining a better balanced view of the past than he possessed. Predominantly the subjects treated in his volumes are political, military, and religious, in that order of emphasis Economic, social, geographical, and other factors in the shaping of history are to varying degrees neglected. Especially noticeable to twentieth century scholars is his lack of regard for economic motives; he gives less than a page to the economic principles behind the planting of colonies in the New World, and fails to consider adequately either the social or economic factors in Revolutionary and Constitutional times He tended to stress the importance of New England over the middle and southern colonies He failed to see th [illegible]
clarity [illegible]
style, [illegible]
material and his digressiveness tended to confuse the narrative His history is nationalistic and emotional, but it must be remembered that he was born in the shadow of Concord and Lexington, less than twenty years after Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown.

The fact that Bancroft was a pioneer in the field of American history, working over masses of material for the first time, becomes more important when one realizes that most of his work was done when monographic materials were lacking, before the collections of America and Europe had been explored, much less catalogued. He did, naturally, make mistakes, many of them because he did not have, as later historians had, the advantages of the spade-work done by hundreds of workers in the field. Modern scholars, with

[illegible] rds, re- [illegible] might well wonder how he made as few as he did. His treatment of the Indian in Volume III, while based on the best information that he had at hand, came to the wrong conclusions simply because he did not possess the knowledge that ethnologists and archaeologists have only recently made available. Cabot, according to Bancroft's conjecture, must have landed somewhere in Labrador, a mistake no modern historian who had the benefit of the work of Harrisse, Prowse, and Dawson, would make Bancroft did not question John Smith's highly colored account of the Pocahontas episode and other events in Virginia history, but then few did until Charles Deane's work led them to do so. He accused James I of dissolving the Virginia Company in a deliberate attempt to crush rebellious parliaments, but he did not have the *Calendar of State Papers* and the monographs of Newton and Craven to guide him, and had he been able to use the Maryland Records and the Calvert papers, he might not have interpreted the Maryland toleration act of 1649 as a landmark in the advance of religious liberty But now and then a guess hit the mark; he shrewdly suspected that Father Hennepin was in the pay of William III, and later research tended to support his claim with evidence that Bancroft did not possess.

The majority of Bancroft's errors, however, arose from his desire to improve the occasion, to read into the past what he wanted to see there. Even with excellent evidence at hand he displayed a habit of drawing unwarranted conclusions from it. His love for all things Teutonic led him to propagate the myth that Prussia had always been a sturdy friend of liberal government, and that Frederick the Great was a sympathetic supporter of the colonies in their revolt against England. He deliberately exaggerated the importance of Frederick's inconsequential assistance to the colonies and overlooked completely Prussia's self-seeking motives in so assisting them, both in disregard of the available facts His belief in democracy blinded him to the cross-currents of colonial society, which he interpreted as predominantly free and equalitarian, missing completely the innately aristocratic and theocratic tendency in society, politics, business, and religion in the seventeenth century. The New Haven colony he characterized as a great experiment in humanity and democracy, when the evidence his time possessed showed definitely that it was much more bigoted and illiberal than

Massachusetts Bay. As an antislavery sympathizer, he was led, without a shred of evidence, to deny the existence of systems of servitude among the Indians, and to attribute the inception of the slave trade in America not only as a means of gain for English merchants but as a method of preventing the "power of colonial resistance" and the rise of American liberalism.

Most serious of all was the fact that his nationalism brought him to conclude that the American Revolution was the result of a deliberate British attempt to tyrannize, rather than of a clash of ideals and economies He refused to admit that Britain had anything but despotism in mind in its treatment of the colonies — the navigation acts were simply tyrannical, Parliament had absolutely no legal rights over the colonies; George III was unquestionably a deliberate despot; the Revolution was accepted wholeheartedly and without hesitation by all Americans but a few blackhearted Tories. Bancroft possessed and had examined a wealth of colonial papers, both British and American, and the evidence to the contrary was perfectly clear. The same type of error was evident in his treatment of the Constitutional period; the evidence was there, but he refused to see anything which marred the symmetry of his plan or denied its existence. Yet his theme was so great, and his belief in it so sincere, that the reader can very nearly excuse, if not forgive, the errors of its proponent. He had a thesis to prove, and he molded history to fit its pattern.

But there was strength and genius in his work. He recognized that colonial history was made up of the separate histories of each colony, and he traced the gradual welding of the disparate states into the unified whole of the republic. He was impartial enough to recognize worth and courage in an enemy, Braddock received fair treatment at his hands and he judged Howe without undue prejudice. He was no myth-maker. He demanded that a man's reputation stand or fall upon his actions, judged in the clear light of history, and his war with the grandsons testified to his determination to follow his creed in practice He was one of the first historians to recognize the importance of foreign diplomacy in the American Revolution. He saw, though dimly, the importance in American history of the Puritan and British heritage, of the frontier West, of colonial trade and finance, of British economic policy, of the French and Indian wars. He had a sense of dramatic values that lent to his work a quality that histories of his and later times often

lack — he planned scenery, introduced characters, and moved his story as a playwright would, picking up the various threads of action and weaving them into an integrated whole against the backdrop of history. In spirit he was as much literary artist as historian. His skilfully-drawn word pictures, his clear-cut expositions of men and motives, imparted to his narrative a readability that American historical writing has rarely matched. The course of modern historical writing has veered from his themes, his methods, and his ideals. No longer may the historian permit himself the same degree of latitude that marked the old tradition. History has approached more closely, as a result, to the ultimate goal of truth, but it has lost something of the tradition of literary art that made Bancroft and the middle group of historians great.

Essentially George Bancroft was a philosopher. His history rested on the faith in man and trust in God that stemmed from his philosophical and religious principles. The writing of history in terms of the progress and liberation of the masses was an integral part of his whole approach to life, in theology, education, literature, and politics. Democracy was the lodestar of his being, and the bias of his work, if such a deeply ingrained conviction may be called by so slight a name, was that of a man being true to his principles. Bancroft studied the past, thought he saw in it the pattern of the future, and put it down in the pages of his history for men to read and take hope.

Appendix

Since Bancroft's writings are now out of print, the following selections have been included to acquaint the reader with his work. The Lexington chapter, taken from Volume IV of the Centenary Edition of the *History*, illustrates in brief the distinguishing characteristics of Bancroft's historical writing *The Office of the People in Art, Government, and Religion,* here summarized from the revised version printed in *Literary and Historical Miscellanies,* provides not only an excellent example of his platform style but his own exposition of the transcendentalist faith in humanity and progress that formed the background for his political philosophy and his approach to history.

LEXINGTON

April 19, 1775.

On the afternoon of the day on which the provincial congress of Massachusetts adjourned, Gage took the light infantry and grenadiers off duty, and secretly prepared an expedition to destroy the colony's stores at Concord But the attempt had for several weeks been expected; a strict watch was kept; and signals were concerted to announce the first movement of troops for the country. Samuel Adams and Hancock, who had not yet left Lexington for Philadelphia, received a timely message from Warren, and in consequence the committee of safety removed a part of the public stores and secreted the cannon.

On Tuesday the eighteenth of April, ten or more sergeants in disguise dispersed themselves through Cambridge and further west, to intercept all communications In the following night, the grenadiers and light infantry, not less than eight hundred in number, the flower of the army at Boston, commanded by the incompetent Lieutenant-colonel Smith, crossed in the boats of the transport ships

from the foot of the common to East Cambridge. There they received a day's provisions; and near midnight, after wading through wet marshes that are now covered by a stately town, they took the road through West Cambridge to Concord.

"They will miss their aim," said one of a party who observed their departure. "What aim?" asked Lord Percy, who overheard the remark "The cannon at Concord," was the answer. Percy hastened to Gage, who instantly directed that no one should be suffered to leave the town. But Warren had already, at ten o'clock, despatched William Dawes through Roxbury, and Paul Revere by way of Charlestown to Lexington.

Revere stopped only to engage a friend to raise the concerted signals, and two friends rowed him across Charles River five minutes before the sentinels received the order to prevent it. All was still, as suited the hour. The "Somerset" man-of-war was winding with the young flood; the waning moon just peered above a clear horizon; while, from a couple of lanterns in the tower of the North church, the beacon streamed to the neighboring towns, as fast as light could travel

A little beyond Charlestown Neck, Revere was intercepted by two British officers on horseback; but, being well mounted, he turned suddenly, and leading one of them into a clay pond, escaped from the other by the road to Medford. Of that town, he waked the captain of the minute men, and continued to rouse almost every house on the way to Lexington.

The troops had not advanced far, when the firing of guns and ringing of bells announced that their expedition had been heralded before them, and Smith sent back for a reinforcement.

On the nineteenth of April, just after midnight, the message from Warren reached Adams and Hancock, who at once divined the object of the expedition. Revere, therefore, and Dawes, joined by Samuel Prescott, "a high Son of Liberty" from Concord, rode forward, calling up the inhabitants as they passed along, till in Lincoln they fell upon a party of British officers. Revere and Dawes were seized and taken back to Lexington, where they were released; but Prescott leaped over a low stone wall, and galloped on for Concord.

There, at about two in the morning, a peal from the belfry of the meeting-house brought together the inhabitants of the place, young and old, with their firelocks, ready to make good the reso-

lute words of their town debates Among the most alert was William Emerson the minister, with gun in hand, his powder horn and pouch of balls slung over his shoulder By his sermons and his prayers, he had so hallowed the enthusiasm of his flock that they held the defence of their liberties a part of their covenant with God; his presence with arms strengthened their sense of duty

From daybreak to sunrise, the summons ran from house to house through Acton. Express messengers and the call of minute men spread widely the alarm. How children trembled as they were scared out of sleep by the cries! how women with heaving breasts bravely seconded their husbands! how the the countrymen, forced suddenly to arm, without guides or counsellors, took instant counsel of their courage! The mighty chorus of voices arose from the scattered farm-houses, and, as it were, from the very ashes of the dead. Come forth, champions of liberty; now free your country; protect your sons and daughters, your wives and homesteads, rescue the houses of God of your fathers, the franchises handed down from your ancestors Now all is at stake, the battle is for all.

Lexington, in 1775, may have had seven hundred inhabitants; forming one parish, and having for their minister the learned and fervent Jonas Clark, the bold inditer of patriotic state papers, that may yet be read on their town records In December, 1772, they had instructed their representative to demand "a radical and lasting redress of their grievances, for not through their neglect should the people be enslaved." A year later, they spurned the use of tea. In 1774, at various town-meetings, they voted "to increase their stock of ammunition," "to encourage military discipline, and to put themselves in a posture of defence against their enemies" In December, they distributed to "the train band and alarm list" arms and ammunition, and resolved to "supply the training soldiers with bayonets"

At two in the morning, under the eye of the minister, and of Hancock and Adams, Lexington common was alive with the minute men; and not with them only, but with the old men also, who were exempts, except in case of immediate danger to the town. The roll was called, and, of militia and alarm men, about one hundred and thirty answered to their names. The captain, John Parker, ordered every one to load with powder and ball, but to take care not to be the first to fire. Messengers sent to look for the British regulars, reported that there were no signs of their approach.

A watch was therefore set, and the company dismissed with orders to come together at beat of drum. Some went to their own homes; some to the tavern, near the south-east corner of the common. Adams and Hancock, whose proscription had already been divulged, and whose seizure was believed to be intended, were persuaded to retire towards Woburn.

The last stars were vanishing from night, when the foremost party, led by Pitcairn, a major of marines, was discovered, advancing quickly and in silence. Alarm guns were fired, and the drums beat, not a call to village husbandmen only, but the reveille to humanity. Less than seventy, perhaps less than sixty, obeyed the summons, and, in sight of half as many boys and unarmed men, were paraded in two ranks, a few rods north of the meeting-house.

How often in that building had they, with renewed professions of their faith, looked up to God as the stay of their fathers and the protector of their privileges! How often on that village green, hard by the burial place of their forefathers, had they pledged themselves to each other to combat manfully for their birthright inheritance of liberty! There they now stood side by side, under the provincial banner, with arms in their hands, silent and fearless, willing to fight for their privileges, scrupulous not to begin civil war, and unsuspicious of immediate danger. The ground on which they trod was the altar of freedom, and they were to furnish the victims.

The British van, hearing the drum and the alarm guns, halted to load; the remaining companies came up; and, at half an hour before sunrise, the advance party hurried forward at double quick time, almost upon a run, closely followed by the grenadiers. Pitcairn rode in front, and, when within five or six rods of the minute men, cried out: "Disperse, ye villains! ye rebels, disperse! lay down your arms! why don't you lay down your arms and disperse?" The main part of the countrymen stood motionless in the ranks, witnesses against aggression; too few to resist, too brave to fly. At this, Pitcairn discharged a pistol, and with a loud voice cried, "Fire!" The order was followed first by a few guns, which did no execution, and then by a close and deadly discharge of musketry.

In the disparity of numbers, Parker ordered his men to disperse. Then, and not till then, did a few of them, on their own impulse, return the British fire. These random shots of fugitives or dying

men did no harm, except that Pitcairn's horse was perhaps grazed, and a private of the tenth light infantry was touched slightly in the leg

Jonas Parker, the strongest and best wrestler in Lexington, had promised never to run from British troops, and he kept his vow A wound brought him on his knees. Having discharged his gun, he was preparing to load it again, when as sound a heart as ever throbbed for freedom was stilled by a bayonet, and he lay on the post which he took at the morning's drum-beat. So fell Isaac Muzzey, and so died the aged Robert Munroe, the same who in 1758 had been an ensign at Louisburg. Jonathan Harrington, Jr., was struck in front of his own house on the north of the common. His wife was at the window as he fell. With blood gushing from his breast, he rose in her sight, tottered, fell again, then crawled on hands and knees towards his dwelling; she ran to meet him, but only reached him as he expired on their threshold. Caleb Harrington, who had gone into the meeting-house for powder, was shot as he came out. Samuel Hadley and John Brown were pursued, and killed after they had left the green. Asahel Porter, of Woburn, who had been taken prisoner by the British on the march, endeavored to escape, was shot within a few rods of the common.

Day came in all the beauty of an early spring The trees were budding; the grass growing rankly a full month before its time; the blue bird and the robin gladdening the genial season, and calling forth the beams of the sun which on that morning shone with the warmth of summer; but distress and horror gathered over the inhabitants of the peaceful town There on the green lay in death the gray haired and the young; the grassy field was red "with the innocent blood of their brethren slain," crying unto God for vengeance from the ground.

Seven of the men of Lexington were killed, nine wounded; a quarter part of all who stood in arms on the green These are the village heroes, who were more than of noble blood, proving by their spirit that they were of a race divine. They gave their lives in testimony to the rights of mankind, bequeathing to their country an assurance of success in the mighty struggle which they began. Their names are had in grateful remembrance, and the expanding millions of their countrymen renew and multiply their praise from generation to generation. They fulfilled their duty not from the accidental impulse of the moment; their action was the slowly

ripened fruit of Providence and of time. The light that led them on was combined of rays from the whole history of the race; from the traditions of the Hebrews in the gray of the world's morning; from the heroes and sages of republican Greece and Rome; from the example of Him who died on the cross for the life of humanity; from the religious creed which proclaimed the divine presence in man, and on this truth, as in a lifeboat, floated the liberties of nations over the dark flood of the middle ages; from the customs of the Germans transmitted out of their forests to the councils of Saxon England; from the burning faith and courage of Martin Luther, from trust in the inevitable universality of God's sovereignty as taught by Paul of Tarsus and Augustine, through Calvin and the divines of New England; from the avenging fierceness of the Puritans, who dashed the mitre on the ruins of the throne; from the bold dissent and creative self-assertion of the earliest emigrants to Massachusetts; from the statesmen who made, and the philosophers who expounded, the revolution of England; from the liberal spirit and analyzing inquisitiveness of the eighteenth century; from the cloud of witnesses of all the ages to the reality and the rightfulness of human freedom All the centuries bowed themselves from the recesses of the past to cheer in their sacrifice the lowly men who proved themselves worthy of their forerunners, and whose children rise up and call them blessed.

Heedless of his own danger, Samuel Adams, with the voice of a prophet, exclaimed: "Oh, what a glorious morning is this!" for he saw his country's independence hastening on, and, like Columbus in the tempest, knew that the storm did but bear him the more swiftly towards the undiscovered world.

THE OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE IN ART, GOVERNMENT, AND RELIGION

An Oration Delivered before the Adelphi Society of Williamstown College, in August, 1835.

I.

The material world does not change in its masses or in its powers. The stars shine with no more lustre than when they first sang together in the glory of their birth. The flowers that gemmed the fields and the forests, before America was discovered, now bloom

around us in their season The sun that shone on Homer shines on us in unchanging lustre. The bow that beamed on the patriarch still glitters in the clouds Nature is the same For her no new forces are generated; no new capacities are discovered The earth turns on its axis, and perfects its revolutions, and renews its seasons, without increase or advancement.

But a like passive destiny does not attach to the inhabitants of the earth. For them the expectations of social improvement are no delusion, the hopes of philanthropy are more than a dream. The five senses do not constitute the whole inventory of our sources of knowledge. They are the organs by which thought connects itself with the external universe; but the power of thought is not merged in the exercise of its instruments We have functions which connect us with heaven, as well as organs which set us in relation with earth We have not merely the senses opening to us the external world, but an internal sense, which places us in connexion with the world of intelligence and the decrees of God

There is a *spirit in man* not in the privileged few, not in those of us only who by the favor of Providence have been nursed in public schools: IT IS IN MAN: it is the attribute of the race. The spirit, which is the guide to truth, is the gracious gift to each member of the human family

Reason exists within every breast I mean not that faculty which deduces inferences from the experience of the senses, but that higher faculty, which from the infinite treasures of its own consciousness, originates truth, and assents to it by the force of intuitive evidence; that faculty which raises us beyond the control of time and space, and gives us faith in things eternal and invisible. There is not the difference between one mind and another, which the pride of philosophers might conceive. To them no faculty is conceded, which does not belong to the meanest of their countrymen In them there can not spring up a truth, which does not equally have its germ in every mind They have not the power of creation; they can but reveal what God has implanted in every breast

The intellectual functions, by which relations are perceived, are the common endowments of the race. The differences are apparent, [illegible] person may be dull, in another quick, in

liable in individual minds to the bias of passion, and yet its relation to truth is immutable and is universal.

In questions of practical duty, conscience is God's umpire, whose light illumines every heart. There is nothing in books, which had not first, and has not still its life within us. Religion itself is a dead letter, wherever its truths are not renewed in the soul. Individual conscience may be corrupted by interest, or debauched by pride, yet the rule of morality is distinctly marked; its harmonies are to the mind like music to the ear; and the moral judgment, when carefully analyzed and referred to its principles, is always founded in right. The eastern superstition, which bids its victims prostrate themselves before the advancing car of their idols, springs from a noble root, and is but a melancholy perversion of that self-devotion, which enables the Christian to bear the cross, and subject his personal passions to the will of God. Immorality of itself never won to its support the inward voice; conscience, if questioned, never forgets to curse the guilty with the memory of sin, to cheer the upright with the meek tranquility of approval. And this admirable power, which is the instinct of Deity, is the attribute of every man; it knocks at the palace gate, it dwells in the meanest hovel. Duty, like death, enters every abode, and delivers its message. Conscience, like reason and judgment, is universal.

II.

If it be true, that the gifts of mind and heart are universally diffused, if the sentiment of truth, justice, love, and beauty exists in every one, then it follows, as a necessary consequence, that the common judgment in taste, politics, and religion, is the highest authority on earth, and the nearest possible approach to an infallible decision. From the consideration of individual powers I turn to the action of the human mind in masses

If reason is a universal faculty, the universal decision is the nearest criterion of truth. The common mind winnows opinions: it is the sieve which separates error from certainty. The exercise by many of the same faculty on the same subject would naturally lead to the same conclusions But if not, the very differences of opinion that arise prove the supreme judgment of the general mind. Truth is one. It never contradicts itself. One truth cannot contradict another truth. Hence truth is a bond of union. But error

not only contradicts truth, but may contradict *itself*; so that there may be many errors, and each at variance with the rest. Truth is therefore of necessity an element of harmony; error as necessarily an element of discord. Thus there can be no continuing universal judgment but a right one. Men cannot agree in an absurdity, neither can they agree in a falsehood.

If wrong opinions have often been cherished by the masses, the cause always lies in the complexity of the ideas presented Error finds its way into the soul of a nation, only through the channel of truth It is to a truth that men listen, and if they accept error also, it is only beacuse the error is for the time so closely interwoven with the truth, that the one cannot readily be separated from the other.

Unmixed error can have no existence in the public mind. Wherever you see men clustering together to form a party, you may be sure that however much error may be there, truth is there also . . .

III.

In like manner the best government rests on the people and not on the few, on persons and not on property, on the free development of public opinion and not on authority; because the munificent Author of our being has conferred the gifts of mind upon every member of the human race without distinction of outward circumstances. . . . A government of equal rights must, therefore, rest upon mind; not wealth, not brute force, the sum of the moral intelligence of the community should rule the State Prescription can no more assume to be a valid plea for political injustice; society studies to eradicate established abuses, and to bring social institutions and laws into harmony with moral right, not dismayed by the natural and necessary imperfections of all human effort, and not giving away to despair, because every hope does not at once ripen into fruit.

The public happiness is the true object of legislation, and can be secured only by the masses of mankind themselves awakening to the knowledge and the care of their own interests. Our free institutions have reversed the false and ignoble distinctions between men; and refusing to gratify the pride of caste, have acknowledged the common mind to be the true material for a commonwealth. Every thing has hitherto been done for the happy few. It is not possible to endow an aristocracy with greater benefits than

they have already enjoyed; there is no room to hope that individ uals will be more highly gifted or more fully developed than th greatest sages of past times. The world can advance only througl the culture of the moral and intellectual powers of the people. T accomplish this end by means of the people themselves, is th highest purpose of government. If it be the duty of the individua to strive after a perfection like the perfection of God, how mucl more ought a nation to be the image of Deity. The common min is the true Parian marble, fit to be wrought into likeness to a God The duty of America is to secure the culture and the happiness o the masses by their reliance on themselves

The absence of the prejudices of the old world leaves us here th opportunity of consulting independent truth; and man is left t apply the instinct of freedom to every social relation and publi interest. We have approached so near to nature, that we can hea her gentlest whispers; we have made Humanity our lawgiver an our oracle, and, therefore, the nation receives, vivifies and applie principles, which in Europe the wisest accept with distrust. Freedom of mind and of conscience, freedom of the seas, freedom o industry, equality of franchises, each great truth is firmly grasped, comprehended and enforced, for the multitude is neither rash no fickle. In truth, it is less fickle than those who profess to be its guides. Its natural dialectics surpass the logic of the schools. Political action has never been so consistent and so unwavering, as when it results from a feeling or a principle, diffused through society. The people is firm and tranquil in its movements, and necessarily acts with moderation, because it becomes but slowly impregnated with new ideas, and effects no changes, except in harmony with the knowledge which it has acquired. Besides, where it is permanently possessed of power, there exists neither the occasion nor the desire for frequent change. It is not the parent of tumult; sedition is bred in the lap of luxury, and its chosen emissaries are the beggared spendthrift and the impoverished libertine. The government by the people is in very truth the strongest government in the world. Discarding the implements of terror, it dares to rule by moral force, and has its citadel in the heart.

Such is the political system which rests on reason, reflection, and the free expression of deliberate choice. There may be those who scoff at the suggestion, that the decision of the whole is to be preferred to the judgment of the enlightened few. They say in their

hearts that the masses are ignorant; that farmers know nothing of legislation; that mechanics should not quit their workshops to join in forming public opinion. But true political science does indeed venerate the masses It maintains, not as has been perversely asserted, that "the people can make right," but that the people can DISCERN right. Individuals are but shadows, too often engrossed by the pursuit of shadows; the race is immortal individuals are of limited sagacity; the common mind is infinite in its experience: individuals are languid and blind, the many are ever wakeful: individuals are corrupt; the race has been redeemed, individuals are time-serving; the masses are fearless· individuals may be false, the masses are ingenuous and sincere. individuals claim the divine sanction of truth for the deceitful conceptions of their own fancies; the Spirit of God breathes through the combined intelligence of the people. Truth is not to be ascertained by the impulses of an individual; it emerges from the contradictions of personal opinions; it raises itself in majestic serenity above the strifes of parties and the conflict of sects, it acknowledges neither the solitary mind, nor the separate faction as its oracle, but owns as its only faithful interpreter the dictates of pure reason itself, proclaimed by the general voice of mankind The decrees of the universal conscience are the nearest approach to the presence of God in the soul of man.

Thus the opinion which we respect is, indeed, not the opinion of one or of a few, but the sagacity of the many. It is hard for the pride of cultivated philosophy to put its ear to the ground, and listen reverently to the voice of lowly humanity, yet the people collectively are wiser than the most gifted individual, for all his wisdom [illegible]
reece
d not
e; but he gleaned the several lineaments of his faultless work om the many. And so it is, that a perfect judgment is the result comparison, when error eliminates error, and truth is established concurring witnesses The organ of truth is the invisible decin of the unbiased world, she pleads before no tribunal but blic opinion; she owns no safe interpreter but the common nd, she knows no court of appeals but the soul of humanity. It when the multitude give counsel, that right purposes find safety; irs is the fixedness that cannot be shaken; theirs is the under-

standing which exceeds in wisdom; theirs is the heart, of which the largeness is as the sand on the sea-shore.

It is not by vast armies, by immense natural resources, by accumulations of treasure, that the greatest results in modern civilization have been accomplished. The traces of the career of conquest pass away, hardly leaving a scar on the national intelligence. The famous battle grounds of victory are, most of them, comparatively indifferent to the human race; barren fields of blood, the scourges of their times, but affecting the social condition as little as the raging of a pestilence Not one benevolent institution, not one ameliorating principle in the Roman state, was a voluntary concession of the aristocracy; each useful element was borrowed from the Democracies of Greece, or was a reluctant concession to the demands of the people. The same is true in modern political life. It is the confession of an enemy to Democracy, that "ALL THE GREAT AND NOBLE INSTITUTIONS OF THE WORLD HAVE COME FROM POPULAR EFFORTS"

It is the uniform tendency of the popular element to elevate and bless Humanity. The exact measure of the progress of civilization is the degree in which the intelligence of the common mind has prevailed over wealth and brute force; in other words, the measure of the progress of civilization is the progress of the people. . . .

Yes, reforms in society are only affected through the masses of the people, and through them have continually taken place. New truths have been successively developed, and, becoming the common property of the human family, have improved its condition. This progress is advanced by every sect, precisely because each sect, to obtain vitality, does of necessity embody a truth; by every political party, for the conflicts of party are the war of ideas; by every nationality, for a nation cannot exist as such, till humanity makes it a special trustee of some part of its wealth for the ultimate benefit of all. The irresistible tendency of the human race is therefore to advancement, for absolute power has never succeeded, and can never succeed, in suppressing a single truth. An idea once revealed may find its admission into every living breast and live there. Like God it becomes immortal and omnipresent. The movement of the species is upward, irresistibly upward. The individual is often lost; Providence never disowns the race No principle once promulgated, has even been forgotten. No "timely tramp" of a despot's foot ever trod out one idea. The world cannot retrograde; the

dark ages cannot return. Dynasties perish; cities are buried, nations have been victims to error, or martyrs for right, Humanity has always been on the advance; gaining maturity, universality, and power.

Yes, truth is immortal; it cannot be destroyed; it is invincible, it cannot long be resisted. Not every great principle has yet been generated, but when once proclaimed and diffused, it lives without end, in the safe custody of the race. States may pass away; every just principle of legislation which has been once established will endure. Philosophy has sometimes forgotten God, a great people never did. The skepticism of the last century could not uproot Christianity, because it lived in the hearts of the millions Do you think that infidelity is spreading? Christianity never lived in the hearts of so many millions as at this moment The forms under which it is professed may decay, for they, like all that is the work of man's hands, are subject to the changes and chances of mortal being; but the spirit of truth is incorruptible; it may be developed, illustrated, and applied; it never can die, it never can decline.

No truth can perish, no truth can pass away The flame is undying, though generations disappear Wherever moral truth has started into being, Humanity claims and guards the bequest Each generation gathers together the imperishable children of the past, and increases them by new sons of light, alike radiant with immortality.

Bibliographical Note

THIS biography is derived almost entirely from George Bancroft's own writings and those of his contemporaries. The surviving records are disconcertingly voluminous. Bancroft preserved with care the greater portion of that correspondence which he deemed important, keeping copies of his letters, manuscripts, galley proofs, notes, transcripts, and memoranda, and his family and many of his correspondents did likewise. The several collections of Bancroft material present a nearly unbroken record of his life from his early college days to his death, making the biographer's task one of selectivity rather than of search. The largest collection is that of the Massachusetts Historical Society, several thousand items of correspondence covering the years from 1817 to 1891, a magnificent body of material deposited with the Society in 1909, through arrangement with the historian's grandson, Wilder C. Bancroft, by M. A. DeWolfe Howe. The collection of the New York Public Library is equally rich for the purposes of the biographer. It includes several hundred letters, transcripts of his diplomatic reports, many notebooks, a large collection of account books and personal papers, catalogues of his library and his historical collections, his student notebooks, two hundred and ten volumes of historical notes and transcripts made for and by Bancroft, the author's bound volumes of original manuscript, and his personal library, purchased by James Lenox in 1893 and placed in the Lenox Library. The American Antiquarian Society at Worcester, Massachusetts, possesses a valuable collection of clippings, memorabilia, and cor-
[illegible] Bancroft
[illegible] written to
[illegible] d visit to
Germany. The Library of Congress contains several items, and in the Harvard University Archives are to be found scattering records of Bancroft's years in Cambridge.

Bancroft's non-historical writings have never been collected,

except for the selected essays, poems, reviews, and orations which he published in 1855 under the name *Literary and Historical Miscellanies.* Oliver Dyer, in the year of Bancroft's death, reprinted some of the historian's fugitive essays in *The History of the Battle of Lake Erie and Miscellaneous Papers* (New York, 1891), but the rest of Bancroft's prose and poetry remains dispersed through the journals in which it first appeared. A complete list of his writings is appended to this bibliography.

There has been one previous biography, *The Life and Letters of George Bancroft* (Two volumes, New York, 1908), by Mark Anthony DeWolfe Howe, a judicious selection of the best of the letters and documents, with a graceful and sympathetic interpretative commentary, a source of information to which this study necessarily owes a large debt. The *Dictionary of American Biography* entry, by the same author, is an excellent brief sketch Four magazine articles by men acquainted with Bancroft furnish additional information A. M. Davis' "George Bancroft," in the *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences,* XXVI.303–315, and S. S Greene's "George Bancroft," in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society,* (April, 1893), contain facts of interest. William M. Sloane, Bancroft's one-time secretary, wrote the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry, and his "George Bancroft — In So-[illegible]

Literature, III· 1432–1458, adds some further reminiscences of value Several studies of Bancroft as a historian have been drawn upon in the preparation of portions of this biography — Watt Stewart's study in *The Marcus W. Jernegan Essays in American Historiography,* edited by W T. Hutchinson, (Chicago, 1937); N. H Dawes and F T Nichols, "Revaluing Bancroft," *The New England Quarterly,* VI 278–293, (June, 1933); M. G. Kraus, *A History of American History,* (New York, 1937); J. S Bassett, *The Middle Group of American Historians,* (New York, 1917); and J F Jameson, *The History of Historical Writing in America,* (New York, 1891). The relation of Bancroft's historical work to his own philosophy, evinced by his letters, essays, and orations, has never before been adequately treated.

Hardly less important than the Bancroft collections themselves as sources of information concerning the historian are the bi-

phies, critical studies, and published correspondence of Bancroft's contemporaries. With his wide circle of friends and his colorful, pleasant personality, his impression upon his acquaintances was deep, and the biographies and letters of nearly any important figure of the nineteenth century will show at least one and usually half-a-dozen references to him. A list of these auxiliary works, used in this study, forms a portion of this bibliography. Three books dealing in a general way with nineteenth century New England must be mentioned here as well as in the chapter bibliographies. Van Wyck Brooks' *The Flowering of New England,* (New York, 1936), his *New England Indian Summer,* (New York, 1940), and H. S Commager's *Theodore Parker,* (Boston, 1936) are studies that portray to perfection the environment of Bancroft's early and middle years and that are mandatory to an understanding of the personality and temper of the times in which he lived and wrote. For data concerning Bancroft's diplomatic activities in Berlin and his relations with Prussian statesmen Count Otto zu Stolberg-Wernigerode's *Germany and The United States During the Era of Bismarck,* (Reading, Pa., 1937), has proved invaluable, for it reprints material drawn from Prussian archives that would otherwise have been unavailable at this time. O. W. Long's *Literary Pioneers,* (Cambridge, 1935), has been equally helpful in the preparation of the chapter on Bancroft's Göttingen years.

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(In each case only the original publication is listed)

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CHAPTER ONE

THE genealogy of the Bancroft family is taken from E B Crane, *Histo*[illegible]
oirs [illegible]
Life [illegible]
Char[illegible]
Tories of 1774 and 1775," *Proceedings of the Worcester Society of Antiquity,* XXII: 60–81 (1906). An autobiographical fragment, found among the papers of the New York Public Library collections, furnished the basis for the account of Aaron Bancroft's boyhood Information on Aaron's middle and late life was secured from S A Eliot, *Heralds of a Liberal Faith,* (Boston, 1910), D H Hurd, *The History of Worcester County, Massachusetts,* (Two volumes, Philadelphia, 1889), and from *The Reverend Mr Hill's Discourse Delivered at the Interment of the Reverend Aaron Bancroft, D D.,* (Worcester, 1839), the funeral sermon delivered by the elder Bancroft's assistant pastor and successor Hill's eulogy and the Worcester *New England Home Journal,* December 28, 1882, provided a complete narrative of the Second Congregational Society controversy. The picture of Worcester at the time of Bancroft's boyhood is drawn from material provided by William Lincoln's *History of Worcester, Massachusetts, from Its Earliest Settlement to September, 1836,* (Worcester, 1862), a book which provided additional information concerning Aaron Bancroft and his family The sketch of Bancroft's childhood is based upon the accounts given by Howe, A S Roe, "The Homes and Haunts of George Bancroft," *New England Magazine,* n s XXII 161–180, (February, 1901), H T Tuckerman, *Homes of American Authors,* (New York, 1857), J T Faris, *Men Who Conquered,* (New York, 1922), and A M. Davis, "A Letter from Lucretia Chandler Bancroft to her Daughter Mrs Gherardi," *American Antiquarian Society Collections,* (October, 1910). Phillips-Exeter and Bancroft's life there is treated in O. F. Adams, *Some Famous American Schools,* (Boston, 1903), Charles H. Bell, *Phillips-Exeter in New Hampshire,* (Exeter, N. H., 1883), and Chapter I, Volume I, of Howe's *Life and Letters.* The description of Harvard in the early decades of the century is adapted from S. E. Morison, *Three*

Centuries of Harvard, (Cambridge, 1936), and Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England,* (New York, 1936). The sketches of Kirkland, Norton, Everett, and others are based upon material drawn from Eliot's *Heralds of a Liberal Faith,* Brooks' *Flowering of New England,* H S Commager's *Theodore Parker,* and John G Palfrey's *A Discourse on the Life and Character of the Reverend John Thornton Kirkland,* (Cambridge, 1840). Information concerning Bancroft's Harvard years is drawn from Howe, Sloane, and from material found in the Harvard University Archives, including Bancroft's college essays and the class-book of the class of 1817, kept by George Emerson. For an account of German-American intellectual relations in the early nineteenth century see the introduction to S. H. Goodnight's "German Literature in American Magazines Prior to 1846," *Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin,* No. IV, (Madison, 1917), Brooks' *Flowering of New England,* H. S. Jantz, "German Thought and Literature in New England," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* XLI 1–46, (January, 1942), and E G. Jaeck, *Mme de Stael and the Spread of German Literature,* (Oxford, 1915).

CHAPTER TWO

The accounts of Bancroft's years at Gottingen are taken almost wholly from his correspondence during the period, preserved with a great many of his notes in the New York Public Library, American Antiquarian Society, and Massachusetts Historical Society collections Valuable additional material was drawn from O. W. Long's scholarly and informative study of the German experiences of Ticknor, Everett, Bancroft, Cogswell, and others, *Literary Pioneers,* (Cambridge, 1936), and from the works of Howe and Van Wyck Brooks, previously quoted. Bancroft's impressions and opinions of Goethe have been fully treated in Long's "Goethe and Bancroft," *Studies in Philology,* XXXVIII: 820–829, (October, 1931).

CHAPTER THREE

The narrative of Bancroft's Cambridge tutorship is based primarily upon Chapter II, Volume I, of Howe's *Life and Letters,* and upon Bancroft's correspondence. The account of Round Hill School is founded upon the le [illegible] Society and
Massachuse [illegible]
Uncle Sam [illegible]
Hill School," *Educational Review,* I. 311–344, (April, 1891), J. S. Bassett, "The Round Hill School," *Proceedings of the American Anti-*

quarian Society, XXVII: 18–62, (April, 1917), and G E. Shattuck, "The Century of Round Hill School," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, LVII 205–209 (December, 1923). O. W Long's *Literary Pioneers* furnished much material for the sketch of Cogswell and his part in the founding and administration of the school Bancroft's unpublished essay, *Of the Liberal Education of Boys*, is to be found in the collections of the New York Public Library Material relating to the Dwight family may be found in Moses King, *Handbook of Springfield, Massachusetts*, (Springfield, 1884), and B J Dwight, *History of the Descendants of John Dwight of Dedham, Massachusetts*, (Two volumes, New York, 1874). The account of Bancroft's early literary work is based upon the essays and reviews themselves, his correspondence, and J. S. Bassett's "The Correspondence of George Bancroft [illegible]

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ford's *Romantic Days in Old Boston*, (Boston, 1923).

CHAPTER FOUR

Bancroft's political activity in the thirties and forties is reflected in his correspondence, while the narrative of the Whig-Democratic party battles in the period is based upon accounts in contemporary newspapers, A. B. Darling, *Political Changes in Massachusetts, 1824–1848*, (New Haven, 1925), Mason Green, *Springfield, 1636–1886*, (Boston, 1888), and F. J Turner, *The United States, 1830–1850*, (New York, 1935). An excellent picture of Boston during the years of Bancroft's residence may be gained from W S Rossiter, *Days and Ways in Old* [illegible]

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trated in "The Correspondence of George Bancroft and Martin Van Buren," *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*, LXII 381–442, (June, 1909) J. S Bassett, in *The Middle Group of American Historians*, (New York, 1917), includes an excellent sketch of Bancroft as a politician, and an anonymous and scurrilous attack upon Bancroft, reviewing his early relations with the Workingmen's and Anti-Masonic parties, titled *George Bancroft: The Story of His Characteristic Treach-* [illegible]

listed in the general bibliography. The portions of the chapter concerning Bancroft's early historical work are based upon the essays, reviews, and the early volumes of the *History,* and upon the studies of Kraus, Dawes and Nichols, Stewart, Jameson, and Bassett, previously mentioned.

CHAPTER FIVE

Glimpses of Bancroft as a member of Polk's cabinet are seen in his correspondence during the period, and in Polk's own record of his administration, reprinted and analyzed in Allan Nevins, *Polk, The Diary of a President,* (New York, 1929), and M. M. Quaife, *The Diary of James K. Polk,* (Chicago, 1910). The establishment of Annapolis is treated in J R Soley, *Historical Sketch of the Naval Academy,* (Washington, 1876), in some of Bancroft's surviving letters, and in his *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy,* December 1, 1845, (Exec. Doc., 29th Congress, 1st Session, no. 2, p. 647). The picture of the early years of the Academy is drawn from Soley and from Fletcher Pratt, *The Navy,* (Garden City, N. Y., 1942). The material concerning Frémont's California expedition and Bancroft's part in it derives from Allan Nevins, *Frémont,* (New York, 1928), and from a letter to Frémont from Bancroft preserved in the Massachusetts Historical Society collections. Bancroft's handling of naval policy in regard to California during the early phases of the Mexican War has been exhaustively treated by T. W. Hittell, "George Bancroft and His Services to California," *California Historical Society Reprints,* (San Francisco, 1893), and the general policy of Polk and his cabinet immediately before the war by G. L. Rives, *The United States and Mexico,* (Two volumes, New York, 1913). The body of material treating of Bancroft's diplomatic mission to London is large. Both the New York Public Library and the Massachusetts Historical Society collections of correspondence contain more than two hundred items from the period, and his wife's letters, reprinted in Elizabeth Davis Bliss Bancroft, *Letters from England,* (New York, 1904), add nearly a hundred more. Transcripts of Bancroft's reports to Secretaries of State Buchanan and Clayton have been preserved in the New York Public Library collection, affording a month to month record of his diplomatic business, and much has been added to it by Beckles Willson, *America's Ambassadors to England,* (New York, 1929). Valuable auxiliary sources of information include W. F. Johnson, *American Foreign Relations,* (New York, 1916), A. C. Rogers, *Our American Representatives Abroad,* (New York, 1874), and Samuel F. Bemis' monumental *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy,* (Ten volumes, New York, 1927–1929).

CHAPTER SIX

For Bancroft's historical work during this period, see the volumes themselves and the historiographical studies previously mentioned. Bancroft's orations and essays are found in his *Literary and Historical Miscellanies*, (New York, 1855), and light is thrown on his relations with Buchanan, Chase, Seward, Lincoln, and others by his correspondence through the fifties. Much additional material is to be found in the biographies of the leading political figures of the day, works cited in the general bibliography.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Bancroft's own letters form the foundation for the portions of this chapter dealing with his part in public life through the war years, while Gideon Welles' *Diary* and the various biographies of Lincoln include occasional but important secondary information. Bancroft's eulogy of Lincoln is taken from newspaper accounts preserved in the White Collection of the Cornell University Library. His part in the publication of the Gettysburg address was first explained by P M Angle, in "Four Lincoln Firsts," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, XXXV 1–13, (First Quarter, 1942) His friendship with Andrew Johnson and the circumstances of his appointment to Berlin are treated in his correspondence and in R. W Winston's *Andrew Johnson Plebeian and Patriot*, (New York, 1928). Credit for the discovery of Bancroft's part in the preparation of Johnson's message to Congress belongs to W A. Dunning, whose papers in the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, XXXIX 395–405, (November, 1905), and *The Magazine of American History*, XI 574–591, (July, 1906), first identified Johnson's co-author The text of the document is found in J D. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789–1897*, (Washington, 1897), and the analysis of the message follows that of C R. Fish in *The American Historical Review*, XI. 951–952, (July, 1906) The description of post-war Washington is drawn in part from Claude Bowers, *The Tragic Era*, (New York, 1929). A complete bibliography of the "Grandfather's war" over Volume IX of the *History* is given in Volume VIII of Justin Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of the United States*, (Boston, 1884–1889).

CHAPTER EIGHT

More records survive from this period of Bancroft's life than from any other. The New York Public Library and Massachusetts Historical,

Society collections contain more than five hundred items of correspondence dating from Bancroft's second German residence, and the series of letters to his niece, Frederika Davis, preserved in the files of the American Antiquarian Society, gives a complete account of his daily life in Berlin. Copies of his reports to Secretary of State Fish, the legation guestbooks, the unpublished sketches of Bismarck and Moltke, and two boxes of scattered notes, all in the New York Public Library, provide a great body of additional material. Prusso-American diplomatic relations from the American point of view are amply treated in the works of Johnson and Bemis, previously cited. A great deal of information concerning Bancroft and his diplomacy, much of it from hitherto unused German sources, has been made available by the excellent study of Count Otto zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, *Germany and the United States During the Era of Bismarck*, (Reading, Pa., 1937). Sloane's *Century Magazine* sketch gives additional material.

CHAPTER NINE

The Massachusetts Historical Society collection of Bancroft's correspondence is particularly rich in items from his last years, containing nearly a thousand items which provided the basis for this chapter. The correspondence of Henry Adams and the reminiscences of John Bigelow afford interesting glimpses of Bancroft's late life, and Howe's *Life and Letters*, as well as J L. Gilder's *Authors at Home*. (New York, 1902), assist in rounding out the picture. Bancroft's account books, his notes on Shakespeare, and numerous other topics, and his letters include further information on his final period. His rose-growing is treated in an article in the New York *Times* for August 25, 1912, while the rose-catalogues and his correspondence with his gardeners supply additional material Study of the two revisions and of the Constitutional history provided the background for the portions of the chapter dealing with his late historical writing. The account of his home life in Washington and that of his family is based upon his letters and an article in the Washington *Evening Star*, for March 29, 1889, and that of his death upon the memorial in the Boston *Advertiser*, January 19, 1891.

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